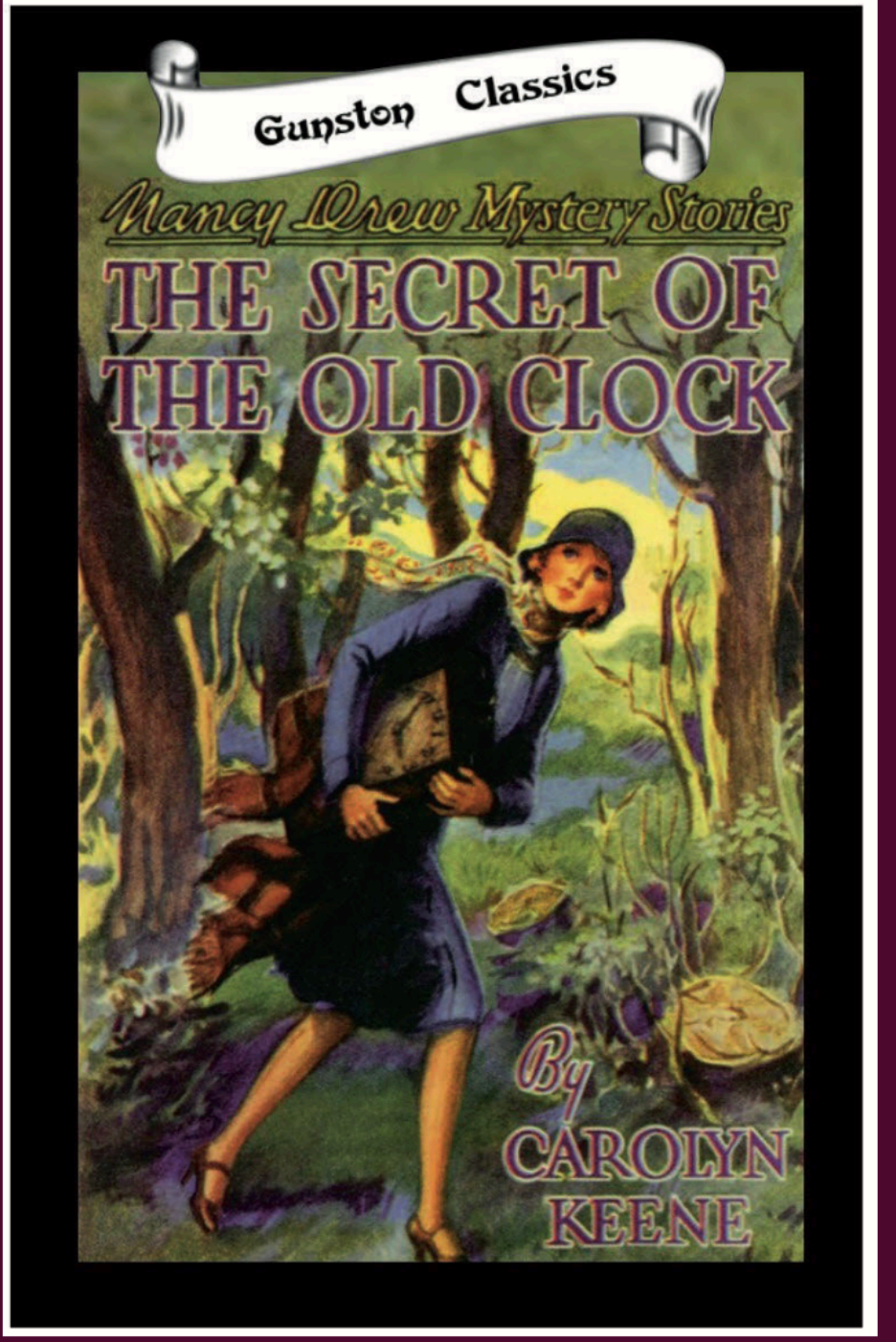
Gunston Classics
Nancy Drew Mystery Stories
THE SECRET OF THE OLD CLOCK
By CAROLYN KEENE

No. 1
NANCY DREW MYSTERY STORIES

THE SECRET OF THE OLD CLOCK

BY
CAROLYN KEENE
ILLUSTRATED BY
RUSSELL H. TANDY
1930

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&
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"THERE'S A CLOCK IN FRONT OF YOU,"
ISABEL TOLD HER POINTEDLY *Frontispiece*

THE SECRET OF THE OLD CLOCK

CHAPTER I The Lost Will

It would be a shame if all that money went to the Tophams! They will ßy higher than ever!Ó

"You weren't paying a bit of attention," she accused him sternly. "I was saying I think it's mean if those snobbish Tophams fall heir to all of Josiah Crowley's fortune. Can't something be done about it?"

Removing his horn-rimmed spectacles and carefully folding the paper, Carson Drew regarded his daughter meditatively.

"I'm afraid not, Nancy. A will is a will, you know."

"But it does seem unfair that *all* the money should go to them. Especially when they never treated Josiah Crowley like a human being!"

"The Tophams were never noted for their charitable dispositions," Carson Drew observed, with a smile. "However, they did give Josiah a home."

"Yes, and everyone knows why! They wanted to work him into leaving all his money to them. And

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In her estimate of the Topham family, Nancy Drew did not exaggerate. Nearly everyone in River Heights shared the opinion that the Tophams were snobbish and arrogant, and the treatment they accorded old Josiah Crowley had aroused a great deal of unfavorable comment.

Nancy had never known Josiah well, but had often seen him on the street and secretly had regarded him as a rather nice but extremely queer sort of individual. His wife had died during the influenza epidemic following the World War, and since that time Crowley had made his home with various relatives. Although well-to-do, he preferred to "visit around."

At first, the Tophams had evidenced no interest in the old man and he had been forced to live with kindly relatives who were scarcely able to have him with them. Crowley appreciated the sacrifice and openly declared that he intended to make his will in their favor.

were unintelligible. After the funeral, only one will came to light and, to the surprise of everyone, it gave the entire fortune to the Tophams.

“Father, what do you suppose it was that Mr. Crowley tried to tell the doctor just before he died?” Nancy demanded, after a moment of thought. “Do you imagine he was trying to disclose something about his will?”

“Very likely, Nancy. Probably he intended to leave his money to more deserving relatives. But fate cheated him of the opportunity.”

“But isn’t it possible that he did make such a will and that he was trying to tell what he had done with it?”

“Yes, that’s a possibility of course. Josiah Crowley was rather queer in many ways.”

“Perhaps he hid the will somewhere,” Nancy suggested thoughtfully.

"I doubt it. While I haven't gone into the case, I am of the opinion that the Tophams have a legal right to the fortune. It would cost considerable to contest the will, and so far as I know the other relatives are in poverty. They have filed a claim, declaring that a later will was made in their favor, but I doubt that the matter will ever go further."

"But the Tophams don't deserve the fortune, father. It doesn't seem fair."

"No, it isn't fair. But it is legal, and I'm afraid nothing can be done about it. There were two girls who live somewhere on the River Road that were great pets of Crowley's when they were children. It seems to me that they should have had something. And there are a number of relatives who really deserve a portion of the fortune."

Nancy nodded thoughtfully and relapsed into silence while she digested the facts of the case. From her father she had acquired the habit of thinking things through to their logical conclusion

his aid in solving perplexing mysteries, and those occasions stood out as red letter days for her.

There was something about a mystery which aroused Nancy's interest, and she was never content until it was solved. More than once her father had found her suggestions, or "intuitions" as he called them, extremely helpful.

For a reason which she could not understand, the Crowley case had attracted Nancy's attention, although it had not fallen into her father's hands. She had a certain feeling that a mystery lurked behind it.

"Father, do you believe Josiah Crowley ever made a second will?" Nancy demanded suddenly.

"You're a regular lawyer, the way you cross-examine me," Carson Drew protested, but with evident enjoyment. "To tell you the truth, I don't know whether he ever made a second will or not. All I do know is that—but perhaps I shouldn't

"That looks as though Mr. Crowley had made up his mind to write a new will, doesn't it?"

"That was the thought which passed through my mind at the time."

"You say you overheard the conversation nearly a year ago," Nancy mused. "That was nearly two years after Mr. Crowley had made the will in favor of the Tophams, wasn't it?"

"Yes. It's likely Crowley had made up his mind to change the will. I suspect he intended to cut the Tophams out, but whether or not he did, I have no way of knowing."

"Mr. Rolsted is an old friend of yours, isn't he?" "He is. An old friend and an old college classmate." "Then why don't you ask him if he ever drew up a will

for Mr. Crowley?"
"That's a rather delicate question to ask, young

"If it is actually missing—yes. But it's possible that if Crowley ever wrote the will he changed his mind and destroyed it. He was subject to sudden whims, you know."

"Anyhow, I'd like to learn more about the case if I can. Will you talk with Mr. Rolsted?"

"You are persistent, Nancy," and Mr. Drew smiled. "Well, I suppose I could invite him to take luncheon with me to-morrow——"

"Oh, please do," Nancy interrupted eagerly. "That would be a splendid opportunity to find out everything he knows about the will."

"All right, I'll try to do it. But I warn you not to expect startling news." Carson Drew glanced at his watch. "Why, it's nearly midnight, Nancy. We've been discussing this case for over an hour. Better run off to bed now and forget the Tophams."

"All right," Nancy agreed somewhat reluctantly.

CHAPTER II
A Chance Meeting

DonÕt forget your luncheon engagement with Mr. Rolsted,Ó Nancy Drew reminded her father the next morning at the breakfast table.

ÒIÕll telephone him the Þrst thing after I reach my ofÞce,Ó Carson Drew promised. ÒBut again I warn you not to anticipate startling news.Ó

ÒI wonÕt, father,Ó Nancy laughed. ÒBut if I should happen to learn something which has a bearing on the missing will, I wonÕt be exactly

"I'll look for you at twelve-thirty, then." Mr. Drew pushed back his chair and glanced at his watch. "I must hurry now or I'll be late getting downtown."

After her father had left, Nancy Drew finished her breakfast and then went to the kitchen to consult with Hannah, the maid, concerning the work of the day. Although only sixteen, Nancy was unusually capable, and under her skillful direction everything ran smoothly in the Drew household.

On the death of her mother six years before, she had taken over the entire management of the establishment. The Drews employed one servant, Hannah Gruen, an elderly maid of all work who had been with them for many years.

The responsibility of the household might have weighed heavily upon Nancy, but she was the type of girl who is capable of accomplishing a great many things in a comparatively short length of time. She enjoyed sports of all kinds and she found time for clubs and parties.

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"I'll not be back for luncheon to-day," Nancy told Hannah, as she prepared to leave the house. "I have made out the dinner menu and ordered the groceries, so I guess you won't need me for a few hours."

Leaving the house, she went to the garage where she kept her automobile. It was a shining new blue roadster, the birthday gift of her father.

Quickly backing the automobile to the street, she set off for the shopping district. She drove swiftly down the boulevard, and upon reaching the more congested streets, wormed her way skillfully through heavy traffic.

Entering a department store, she made a number of small purchases on the main floor and then went directly to the wearing apparel section, as it was her intention to purchase a frock suitable for the afternoon party to which she had been invited.

Usually, Nancy found the service excellent, but this

"I am afraid I can't," the floor manager said regretfully. "There are a number of others ahead of you. An extra rush of customers— —"

"Perhaps you don't know who we are!" Ada interrupted rudely.

"Indeed, I do," the floor manager told her, with a trace of weariness. "I will have a saleswoman here in a few moments. If you will only wait— —"

"We're not accustomed to waiting," Isabel Topham told him icily.

"Such service!" Ada chimed in. "Do you realize that my father owns stock in this store? If we report your conduct to him, he could have you discharged."

"I'm sorry," the harassed floor manager apologized. "But it is a rule of the store. You must await your turn."

Ada tossed her head and her dark eyes flashed

arrogant. They had never been popular with their classmates and had boasted few friends.

Now, as they turned from the floor manager and saw her for the first time, Nancy bowed.

Isabel coldly returned the bow but did not speak a word of greeting. Ada gave no indication that she had even noticed her.

"Snobs!" Nancy told herself. "The next time I won't even bother to speak to them!"

At that moment a saleswoman hurried toward the Topham girls and at once they began to shower abuse upon her for her failure to wait upon them sooner. Nancy watched them curiously as they examined the gowns which the saleswoman brought out for their approval. Evidently, Isabel and Ada were in an unpleasant frame of mind, for they tossed aside beautiful creations of lace and chiffon with scarcely a second glance. They found fault with everything.

“Do watch where you are going!” she said tartly.

Nancy stifled a sharp retort and made no reply. Not without amusement she watched the Topham sisters as they flounced to the elevator.

“I don’t wonder that people say such mean things about them,” Nancy told herself.

Her thoughts were cut short as a saleswoman offered her services. It was the same girl who had waited upon the Topham sisters.

Nancy quickly selected a party frock of blue crepe which matched her eyes, and went to the fitting room to try it on.

“It’s a real pleasure to serve you, Miss Drew,” the saleswoman assured her when they were alone. “But how I dread to see the Topham sisters come into the store! They are so unreasonable.”

“Ada and Isabel aren’t very popular,” Nancy agreed. “They seem to think their word is law.”

indicated to her that they were of the opinion that Josiah Crowley had made a second will. Evidently, they were somewhat disturbed by the claims of the other relatives.

Ordering the frock which she had purchased sent to her home, Nancy glanced at her watch and saw that it was after twelve o'clock.

"I must hurry or I'll be late in meeting father," she thought, and left the store.

She drove directly to her father's office, and although a few minutes ahead of the appointed time, found that he was ready to leave.

"What luck, father?" Nancy demanded eagerly, when they were alone in the inner office. "Did Mr. Rolsted promise to take luncheon with you?"

"Yes. We are to meet him at the Royal Hotel in ten minutes. Do you still think I should quiz him about the Crowley will?"

their way to the dining room where a table had been reserved for them.

At first the conversation centered about a variety of subjects. As the luncheon progressed the two lawyers began to talk enthusiastically of their college days together and finally of their profession. Nancy began to fear that the subject of the Crowley estate never would be brought up.

Then, over the coffee cups, Carson Drew skillfully swung the conversation into a new channel and began to discuss strange cases which had fallen into his hands.

"By the way, I haven't heard the details of the Crowley case. How are the Tophams making out? I understand the relatives are trying to break the will."

For a moment Mr. Rolsted remained silent, and Nancy began to think that he did not intend to enter into a discussion of the case.

"You may trust Nancy not to repeat," Mr. Drew observed, guessing what was in the lawyer's mind. "I've found that out by experience," and Carson Drew smiled upon his daughter.

"Then I will say this much—it would not surprise me if another will should come to light. The Tophams treated Crowley most unkindly after he had made his will in their favor. About a year ago Crowley came to my office and told me that he wanted to draw up a new will. He indicated that he intended to cut the Tophams off without a cent. He expressed a desire to write the will himself, and asked me a number of questions. I told him exactly how to proceed. When he left my office he promised that he would have me look over the document when he had drawn it up."

"Then you actually saw the will?" Mr. Drew asked in surprise.

"No, strange to say, Crowley never came back. I don't know whether he drew up the will or not."

While her father and Mr. Rolsted discussed the case, Nancy Drew remained silent, but not a word of what was said escaped her. Although she gave no indication of her feelings, the information excited her.

After a time, Mr. Drew paid the luncheon check and the three arose and left the dining room. Mr. Rolsted took leave of them in the lobby.

"Well, Nancy, did you find out what you wanted to know?" Carson Drew inquired after the lawyer had disappeared.

"Oh, father, it's just as I suspected! Mr. Crowley did make a second will!"

"You mustn't jump hastily at conclusions," Mr. Drew warned her. "It's possible that Crowley never drew up the will at all, or if he did, he may have destroyed it."

"That's possible, of course. But he had no love for

But after she had said good-bye to her father and was slowly driving toward home, doubt assailed her. She knew that the odds were against her. Although she was determined to find out what had become of the Crowley will, she was at a loss to know how to begin. As her father had reminded her, she did not have a single clue.

" 'Where there's a will, there's a way,' " she quoted whimsically. "That old proverb is doubly true in the Crowley case. If there actually is a

CHAPTER III Racing the Storm

Nancy, if you havenÕt planned anything special for the day, I wonder if you would care to do a little errand for me?Ó inquired Carson Drew one morning at the breakfast table.

ÒWhy, of course,Ó Nancy agreed pleasantly. ÒWhat is it?Ó ÒI have a number of legal documents which must be delivered to Judge Hartgrave at Masonville some time before noon. I would take them myself, but I

collected his own belongings, she had backed the roadster from the garage and was waiting for him, at the curbing.

"I haven't heard you mention the Crowley case lately," Mr. Drew commented as they rode along together. "Have you forgotten about it?"

Nancy's face clouded.

"No, I haven't forgotten, but I must admit I have made no progress. I guess I'm not cut out for a detective!"

"Don't feel discouraged, Nancy. The Crowley case would baffle a professional."

"I haven't given it up yet, father. I may stumble onto a clue one of these days."

When they reached the law office, Nancy stopped the roadster and her father got out. He disappeared inside the building and, returning a few minutes later, placed a fat manilla envelope in Nancy's

appear to be rolling up very fast, and Nancy told herself that there was no need to worry.

"It won't rain for an hour or two, and by that time I'll be home," she thought.

Nancy took her time on the road and it was nearly eleven o'clock when she finally drove into Masonville. She went at once to Judge Hartgrave's office but was informed that he had gone to the courthouse. Nancy knew that the legal papers which she had been sent to deliver were important, and rather than leave them with the office girl she set off in search of the judge.

She had considerable trouble in finding him, and it was nearly twelve o'clock when at last she delivered the manilla envelope into his hands. Learning that Nancy was the daughter of Carson Drew, Judge Hartgrave insisted that she take luncheon at his home before returning to River Heights.

She said good-bye and started the motor. Soon she was spinning along the road which wound in and out along the Muskoka River. Nancy met few automobiles, for the road was infrequently traveled. She did not hurry, but took time to enjoy the scenery.

Overhanging trees with dense foliage shaded the road and formed a tunnel which all but blotted out the sky. Presently, as Nancy drove into a clearing, she was astonished to see how dark it had become.

Evidently, the big black cloud which had attracted her attention earlier in the day was no longer bluffing. It had grown rapidly in size and was spreading over the sky in an alarming fashion. As Nancy Drew watched, the sun vanished as though by magic.

"How foolish of me to take this road," she chided herself. "I'm going to be caught in the storm! There isn't a chance that I can make it!"

“If only I can find a farmhouse where I can drive in until the storm passes!” Nancy thought desperately.

The sky was now entirely overcast and in among the trees it was as dark as night. Nancy could not see the road distinctly, and switched on the headlights of her roadster. A brisk breeze began to stir the trees, and the leaves seemed to whisper a fearful warning of the storm to come. A feeling of uneasiness took possession of Nancy Drew.

She stepped on the accelerator and the roadster fairly leaped forward as though it, too, understood the need for haste. Suddenly, a flash of forked lightning coursed across the sky and was followed by a loud clap of thunder.

“That was close!” Nancy murmured uncomfortably.

She bent low over the wheel and took the curves as fast as she dared. An unexpected gust of wind struck the road and blew dust in every direction. As

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Nancy turned on the windshield wiper, but the rain was blinding in its violence. It was impossible to see more than a few feet ahead of the automobile, and almost in an instant the road had dissolved into a sea of mud. Nancy had been caught in a number of storms, but never one like this. She feared that she would slip into a ditch before she could reach the shelter of the barn.

Then, at the side of the road, the barn loomed up, and in relief Nancy saw that the doors were wide open. Without an instant's hesitation, she headed straight for the building and drove in.

Safely inside, she turned off the motor and the lights, and with a sigh of relief sank back against the cushions.

"Well, you got in just in time," said a pleasant voice behind her.

Startled, Nancy Drew turned quickly and saw a girl of her own age regarding her with interest. Even as

In the semidarkness, Nancy studied the girl curiously. She had been impressed with her cultured voice and manner, and now she noted that her clothing, while not expensive, was neat and well made. The girl did not appear to be the daughter of a farmer who would live on this poor land, yet she seemed to fit into her background.

"It looks to me as though we're in for a real storm," the girl said and smiled pleasantly. She glanced outside at the pelting rain. "I'm afraid you'll be forced to remain here for some time."

"So long as I'm not out in the rain I don't mind," Nancy replied quickly. "That is, if you don't object."

"Object?" The girl spoke impulsively. "Oh, you can't understand how eager we are for visitors. Grace and I seldom have a chance to talk with anyone our own age. Sometimes a whole week will go by, and we won't see anyone but the postman."

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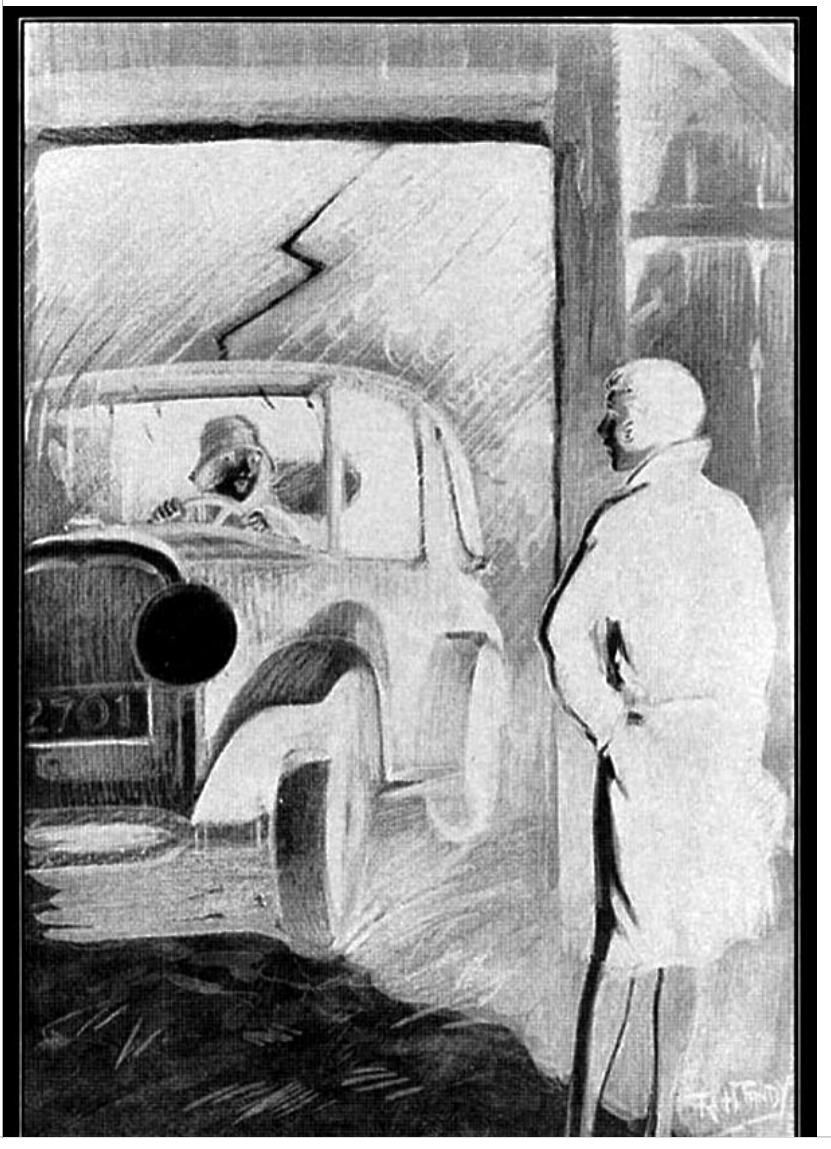

CHAPTER IV An Interesting Story

The storm is getting worse every minute,Ó

Nancy DrewÕs companion observed.

T

Nancy followed her to the barn door and looked out. The rain was now coming down in torrents, and as the girls stood in the doorway a sudden gust of cold wind blew a sheet of water into their faces.

ÒOh, letÕs get back where itÕs dry,Ó Nancy laughed. ÒThis is terrible!Ó

ÒItÕs getting cold, too,Ó her companion

"I don't want to take your raincoat," Nancy protested. "What will you wear?"

"Oh, I have an old coat hanging here on a nail. I'll use that. Anyway, the rain won't hurt my dress."

Under protest, Nancy donned the raincoat and put on a pair of rubber boots which were several sizes too large for her. She made such a grotesque picture that the two girls could not help but laugh. Then they closed the barn doors.

"Now!" Allie directed. "Let's make a dash for it!"

Hand in hand they splashed through the mud toward the farmhouse. As they ran, a vivid flash of lightning momentarily illuminated the sky and caused the girls to cringe. The rain pelted down steadily, and the atmosphere was much colder than it had been ten minutes before.

"If it gets any colder we'll have hail," Allie chattered, as the two girls reached the shelter of the

Nancy was at once attracted to both Grace and Allie, and responded to their cordial welcome.

"It's nice of you to take me in this way," she told them.

"Mercy! It's a pleasure for us," Grace assured her. "We don't see a girl of our own age once in a month unless we go to Masonville, and our visits there aren't very frequent, Miss Drew."

"Oh, please call me by my first name," Nancy begged. "Everyone does."

The three girls were soon laughing and talking together as though they had always been friends. Nancy knew that she was going to like the Horner girls, and it was evident they were delighted with her.

Presently, Grace deftly removed a cake from the oven and set it on the table to cool.

"Let's go into the living room," she suggested

furnished heat, there was little in the room. However, dainty white curtains covered the windows, and Nancy realized that although the Horner girls were poor they had tried hard to make their home attractive.

“Surely, you two girls don’t live here alone, do you?” Nancy inquired.

Allie nodded.

“Grace and I have been living here ever since father died. That was two years ago. Mother passed away just before that,” the girl added with a slight catch in her voice.

“But how do you manage? It must be dreadfully hard for two girls to run a farm by themselves,” said Nancy, in wonder.

“Our farm isn’t very large now,” Grace said quietly. “We have only a few acres.”

“I know you wonder how we live, but are too

the winter it's hard. I don't know how we'll manage this year."

"We'll find a way, Allie," Grace told her, with a brave smile. "We always have."

She arose from her chair and turned to Nancy.

"I'm sure you're not interested in our misfortunes. It's true that we're poor, but we can still offer a guest a cup of tea. Excuse me while I make it."

It was on the tip of Nancy's tongue to protest, but she checked the words just in time. She knew that Allie and Grace were proud and that to refuse their hospitality would hurt their feelings.

"I wish I could help them," Nancy thought. "But if I offer to pay for the tea they will be offended. Perhaps later on I can engage Grace to make a dress for me."

In a few minutes Grace returned to the living room bearing a tray which had been covered with a clean

have figured in the will. The relationship would be worth investigating, Nancy told herself.

"Then your uncle is dead?" she inquired sympathetically.

"Josiah Crowley wasn't really our uncle," Grace replied. "But we loved him as much as though he were a relative." Her voice broke and for a moment she could not go on. "He lived next door to us—that was when mother and father were alive. All of our misfortunes seemed to come at once."

"He was the dearest man you ever saw," Allie added, taking up the story. "Some people thought him queer, but you never minded his peculiar ways after you knew him. He was so good and kind to us. We were neighbors for years—until the Tophams induced him to live with them. After that, everything was changed."

"But he never liked it with the Tophams," Grace declared. "They weren't kind to him, and he used

Josiah, and I don't believe he intended to leave his money to them."

"Perhaps you were mentioned in the will they say can't be found," Nancy suggested.

Grace and Allie exchanged significant glances and gravely nodded.

"That's just what we think," Allie announced.

"Can't something be done about it? It seems only fair that you should have your inheritance."

"I'm afraid there's nothing we can do," Grace said doubtfully. "You see, although we are certain a will was made in our favor, we have no actual proof. We haven't enough money to fight the case."

"The Tophams ought to do something for you girls."

"The Tophams?" Allie laughed scornfully. "They wouldn't give us a cent."

"Why, yes, I suppose so," Grace admitted slowly. "But we have told you about everything we know concerning the will."

"My father is a wonder at unearthing hidden facts," Nancy declared.

"It's kind of you to tell your father about our case," Allie broke in. "We'd be so grateful if something could be done. We don't want a cent that doesn't belong to us, but it does seem as though we should have received a small inheritance."

"Don't build up your hopes until after I've talked

CHAPTER V A Conference

Although the rain was no longer falling, the River Road was a sea of mud, and before Nancy Drew started for home, the Horner girls insisted on helping her put chains on the rear wheels of the roadster. ÒYouÕll never make it to the gravel unless you do,Ó Grace advised her. ÒThe River Road is terribly slippery in wet weather. YouÕre sure you want to attempt it? WeÕd love to have you stay with us until to-morrow.Ó

ÒOh, IÕll have only two miles to go before I strike

"Or into a ditch—that would be worse."

"What are you trying to do, make me nervous?" demanded Nancy, but with a smile on her face.

"No; we only want to see you get home safely," answered Grace, and by that time the car was so far on its way no more could be said.

Once on her way Nancy had little trouble, for she was a skillful driver. The mud was heavy, but although the roadster slipped about she managed to keep it in the road. Nevertheless, she was relieved when at last she reached the main graveled highway.

"I'll stop at father's office," she decided, as she drove into River Heights. "I want to tell him about my adventure right away."

She parked the car and surveyed it rather ruefully as she climbed out.

"Poor thing needs a bath! But even if I did get into

"Allie and Grace Horner are as poor as church mice, but they're proud, too," Nancy ended. "If only we could do something to help them! They deserve a portion of the Crowley estate, but they'll never get it unless someone takes a hand."

"From what you say it looks as though Crowley really did make a will in their favor," Carson Drew commented thoughtfully. "I never had any particular liking for Richard Topham, and I'll admit it would please me to see him lose the money. I'll be glad to do anything I can to help the Horner girls, Nancy. We might invite them to the house for a little conference."

"I was hoping you would suggest that."

"You say the girls have no idea what became of the will?"

"They never saw it."

"Well, it is possible that by talking with them we

"I knew you'd try to help them," she called back over her shoulder. "Now that you've promised, I'll scamper off and let you get your work done!"

Nancy's interest in the Crowley case had intensified since her chance meeting with the Horner girls, and it was with impatience that she awaited the conference.

All the day of the appointment she kept watching the clock, wondering if Allie and Grace would keep the engagement. She had sent them the invitation and they had promised to come, but Nancy was a trifle uneasy, especially as the hour of three approached and the two girls had not arrived.

"I don't see why they don't come," she fretted.

The words were scarcely out of her mouth when the doorbell jangled.

"That must be the girls now," she cried, as she hurried to open the door.

"Did he?" Allie laughed. "He was always putting things away in what he called a safe place. The place was usually so safe that he could never find it again!"

"Did he ever say anything which would lead you to believe that he had hidden a will?"

Allie shook her head.
"Not that I can remember."
"Why, he did, too!" Grace broke in. "One day when he

was at our house he got to talking about the Tophams and the way they were trying to get his money. 'I guess they'll be fooled all right when they find out I've made another will,' he said with that odd little chuckle of his. 'This time I'm not going to trust it to any lawyer. I'll put it away in a place that I know will be safe.' "

"That's right," Allie agreed. "I had forgotten."

"If I find that I am able to help you in any way, I will do so," Mr. Drew told the sisters as he escorted them to the door. "And of course there will be no charge for my services. However, unless the will is found there is really very little that can be done."

After Allie and Grace had left, Nancy turned inquiring eyes upon her father.

"Charming girls," he commented, "and undoubtedly deserving."

"Then you'll help them?" Nancy demanded eagerly.

"I am afraid there is nothing I can do, Nancy," Mr. Drew returned regretfully. "The will is probably lost forever. It wouldn't surprise me if it had been destroyed."

"You mean—the Tophams?"
Carson Drew nodded.
"The same thought came to me," Nancy declared.

I’m sure of it, I’m not going to give up!” She squared her shoulders with determination. “I’ll find some way to discover what became of the will!”

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CHAPTER VI

An Unpleasant Encounter

In spite of Nancy DrewÕs Þrm decision to assist the Horner girls, the days slipped by and, try as she would, she could think of no way to discover

I whether or not the missing Crowley will had fallen into the hands of the Tophams. Although she seldom discussed the case with her father, he knew that she was troubled.

athletic, and as she swung along more than one passerby turned to look after her in admiration.

After "window shopping" for a time, she wandered into a department store more from curiosity than because she had anything to buy. She moved about aimlessly, gazing at whatever struck her fancy.

Suddenly Nancy's attention centered upon two girls who were hurrying down the aisle ahead of her. She stopped short and stared. Though their backs were turned, she had recognized them.

"Ada and Isabel Topham! I'm sure I don't want to tag them around! I'll just slip down another aisle!"

But Nancy Drew never carried the thought into action, for at that very moment she saw Ada brush carelessly against a counter of expensive vases. As her sleeve caught, a large fragile bowl was swept to the floor. In horror Nancy heard the crash and saw the bowl break into a dozen pieces.

"This impudent girl claims I broke a vase," Ada stormed, addressing the floor manager. "I wasn't even near the counter at the time! However, I did see her knock it to the floor herself. Isn't that so, Isabel?"

Solemnly, Isabel agreed to the untruth.

The floor manager looked doubtfully from the Topham sisters to the saleswoman. He realized that it would be a serious error to accuse well-to-do customers falsely, and for that reason he was inclined to give the Topham girls the benefit of the doubt. He stooped over and examined the fragments of the bowl.

"Someone must pay for the damage," he said severely. "This is an expensive imported bowl."

"Then let your clerk pay for it out of her salary," Ada retorted. "If she hadn't been so stupid she wouldn't have broken the vase!"

"Yes. As Miss Topham walked by the counter, her sleeve caught on the vase."

"It isn't true," Ada snapped. "But I'm tired of this silly argument. How much do you want for your vase?"

The floor manager studied a price list.
"Fifty dollars."
"What?" Ada fairly screamed. "You want fifty dollars for

that old bowl? I'll never pay it!"
"The vase was imported from Italy, Miss, and I am afraid

you must pay the price asked."
"Do you know who I am?" Ada inquired loftily.
"I think everyone in the city knows about the Richard

Tophams," the floor manager returned wearily.
"My father owns——"

settling for the damage Ada had done, they sailed grandly out of the store.

Gratefully, the saleswoman thanked Nancy.

“You don’t know how I appreciated the way you took my part. I couldn’t have paid for the bowl, and if you hadn’t said what you did the floor manager probably would have discharged me.”

“I saw her break the bowl and I was determined to see justice done. There is my name and address—if you need it,” and Nancy handed the woman her card.

“I’m afraid you have made enemies by taking my part.” Nancy shrugged her shoulders indifferently. “It really doesn’t matter. The Topham girls were never

my friends.”
“But they may try to get even with you. They’re very

had taken. Upon leaving the department store they, too, had gone to the park and were now seated upon a bench engaged in earnest conversation. Their heads were close together, and, from the expression on their faces, Nancy suspected that they were discussing her. Unless she retraced her steps it would be necessary to pass directly in front of them.

"If they see me they are certain to say something mean," Nancy thought, "and if they do I'll be sure to lose my temper. I know!" she decided impulsively. "I'll take the path through the bushes and avoid them. I can pass behind that bench and they'll never notice me!"

Ada and Isabel were so engrossed in their conversation that they failed to notice Nancy's approach. Chuckling to herself, Nancy left the sidewalk and quietly made her way down the path which was shaded with overhanging bushes.

She had no intention of attempting to overhear

Oh, if only she might learn something which would prove that the Tophams had deprived the Horner girls of their inheritance!

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CHAPTER VII Nancy Turns Sleuth

While Nancy Drew eagerly waited,

scarcely daring to breathe naturally lest her presence

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be detected, Ada began to speak.
ÒWell, if there should happen to be another will, we may

be dumped,Ó she said sourly.
ÒI donÕt believe Josiah Crowley ever made such a will,Ó

did have a way of nosing into things she had no business to find out!"

"Oh, pooh for her," Isabel scoffed. "Let her try to discover anything she likes. The money was given to us fairly enough."

The conversation ended abruptly as Isabel and Ada arose from the bench and walked on down the street. Nancy waited until they were out of sight and then emerged from the bushes.

"There may be a chance to find that missing will after all," she reasoned, as she sank down on the bench vacated by Isabel and Ada.

Nancy had always been convinced that Josiah Crowley had made a second will. However, since her talk with the Horner girls, she had shared her father's opinion that the document had fallen into the hands of the Tophams only to be destroyed. This conviction had discouraged her.

THE SECRET OF THE OLD CLOCK

Nancy Drew possessed her father's liking for a mystery, and she delighted in a battle of wits when championing a worthy cause. Carson Drew had often remarked that he enjoyed the detective work of his cases better than the court work, but Nancy knew he was too busy with his own cases to devote much attention to the missing Crowley will. If anything were done to help the Horner girls win their inheritance, she must accomplish it herself.

As Nancy reviewed the facts of the case, it seemed to her that she must have overlooked a possible clue. Never had a mystery appeared more baffling.

For nearly ten minutes Nancy sat lost in deep thought. Then, with a cry of delight she sprang to her feet.

"How stupid of me not to think of it before! The Horner girls aren't the only ones who should have figured in the will. There were a number of relatives, and father said that they filed a claim, too. I wonder who they are. If I could talk with

"At your service, Nancy," Mr. Drew said. "But if it's about that Crowley case, I've told you everything I know."

Nancy poured out the story of her encounter with the Topham sisters in the department store and told of the conversation she had overheard in the public park. Mr. Drew listened with interest until she had finished.

"And now what is it you want?" he asked gravely.

"I thought if I went to those other relatives I might be able to learn something which may help solve the mystery."

"A good idea, Nancy."

"But I don't know their names, and that's why I came to you."

"I wish I could help you, but I'm afraid I can't," Mr. Drew said regretfully.

"You can try them, at least."

"That's just what I'll do," Nancy decided, as she turned again toward the door.

"Just a minute," Carson Drew stopped her. "I wonder if you realize just what you are getting into, Nancy?"

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Only this. Detective work isn't always the safest occupation in which to engage. I happen to know that Richard Topham is an unpleasant man when crossed. If you actually succeed in learning anything which may help the Horner girls, you are certain to have the Tophams in your wool."

"I'm not afraid of them, father."

"Good!" Mr. Drew exclaimed. "I was hoping you would say that. I'm glad you have the courage of your convictions, but I didn't want you to march off into battle without a knowledge of what

With characteristic impetuosity, she darted from the room, permitting the office door to bang behind her.

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CHAPTER VIII A Discouraging Day

After leaving her fatherÕs ofÞce, Nancy Drew went directly home. Quickly backing her roadster from the garage, she set off down the River Road in the direction of the old farmhouse where the Horner girls lived.

Before leaving the main highway, Nancy glanced anxiously at the sky and was relieved that no clouds were visible.

ÒAfter my last experience, I donÕt intend to get

Squawking chickens fled before her as she stopped the roadster in the barnyard and switched off the engine. Springing lightly from the car, she ran up the walk toward the house. She paused at the kitchen door and rapped.

Receiving no response, she went around to the front of the house and knocked on another door. There was no answer. Nor did a tour of the yard reveal either of the Horner girls.

Disappointment took possession of Nancy. She had driven nearly fifteen miles only to find no one at home.

“I’m defeated at every turn,” she thought disconsolately, as she slowly walked back to the roadster. “It’s certainly discouraging.”

“Hello, there!” a voice called. “Were you looking for us?”

The shouted greeting reached Nancy as she

“You must come into the house and have a dish of berries, Nancy,” Grace urged hospitably. “They’re good with sugar and cream.”

“If you don’t have them too often,” Allie added.

“I can stop but a minute,” Nancy declared, as the three entered the house. “I came to talk about the will.”

“Oh, then you have good news for us?” Allie asked hopefully. “Are we really going to get some of the money?”

“I don’t know yet,” Nancy was forced to admit. “So far I haven’t been able to learn a thing about the missing will.”

Allie’s face fell, but she tried to hide her disappointment.

“We need the money so badly,” she said, with an apologetic smile. “Grace hasn’t had a new dress in three years. She makes all of our clothing out of

"Will I? Oh, you don't know how grateful I am for the work. I haven't had anything to do for nearly three months. I don't mind poverty so much for myself, but for Allie—" her voice broke. "I promised mother I'd look after her."

Allie sprang from her chair and rushed to her sister. She flung her arms affectionately about her.

"Oh, Grace, I shouldn't have said what I did about needing money. I didn't mean it! Truly, I didn't."

"But it's the truth."

"We'll get along, Grace. If only my chicken money came in faster! Why can't a hen lay more than one egg a day?"

Grace smiled faintly at Allie's feeble attempt at a joke, and, to break an awkward silence, Nancy took up the conversation.

"I'll bring the dress material with me the next time I come this way."

"Let me see," Grace lost herself in thought. "There are two cousins living in Masonville."

"Matilda and Edna Turner," Allie prompted her. "They're regular old maids, but awfully nice. They were wonderful to Uncle Josiah when he was alive."

"And there were two nephews," Grace went on. "William and Fred Mathews. They have a farm on this same River Road. Everyone thought they would get something."

"How far do they live from here?" Nancy inquired.

"Oh, not more than five miles. You could drive there in a few minutes. It's on the way to Masonville."

"Then I'll be able to make the two calls on the same trip," Nancy announced, as she arose to depart. "I must hurry along now or it will be too late for me to stop there this afternoon. I am hoping

"Even a few hundred dollars would have meant so much to her," Allie added. "Abigail is old and feeble now. She must be more than seventy years of age, and there's no one to look after her."

"Where shall I find her?" Nancy asked quickly.

"She lives over on the West Lake Road," Grace responded. "It's a good many miles from here. You could make inquiry at some of the farmhouses along the road."

"I won't have time to go there to-day, but I'll surely call upon her as soon as I can. And now I must be going or it will be dark long before I get back to River Heights."

Nancy said good-bye hastily. The Horner girls accompanied her to the roadster and watched her drive away. As she looked back from the corner, they waved their handkerchiefs.

"Plucky girls!" Nancy thought. "Until to-day I

first the man was inclined to distrust her, but after he had made certain that she was not a friend of the Richard Topham family, he talked frankly of Josiah Crowley and told all that he knew concerning the will.

"My brother and I have filed a complaint with the proper authorities at the courthouse," he explained. "We feel certain there must have been another will because Uncle Josiah always said that he intended to leave us something."

"Did you actually see the will?" Nancy questioned hopefully.

The farmer shook his head.

"No, my brother and I haven't the proof that he ever made a second will. But we do know that he never had any particular love for the Tophams. He felt that they took him in only because they were after his money, and I guess he wasn't wrong at that. Anyway, I am certain he had made up his

"Rumor! Rumor!" she sighed. "That's all I hear. At my next stop I hope I'll acquire a few facts!"

Upon reaching Masonville, Nancy made inquiry and was directed to the home of the Turner sisters. They lived alone at the outskirts of the city. Although not in poverty, they did not have any more money than they needed.

Nancy found them at home, and when they learned the purpose of her visit they greeted her cordially. They were very pleasant ladies and she spent nearly an hour at their home. But although they answered her questions willingly, she learned nothing which had a direct bearing on the missing will.

Matilda and Edna Turner insisted that Josiah Crowley had intended to disinherit the Tophams, but they had no idea what could have become of the later will. They had been led to expect a small inheritance, and were disappointed that everything

was, and I'm sure there is one. I've often heard father say that no real mystery is solved without a lot of hard work—and I'm ready to believe it!"

With the exception of Abigail Rowen, Nancy had called upon all of the Crowley relatives. From what the Turner sisters had told her, she was doubtful that a visit to her cottage would be worth while.

"Oh, well, I suppose I may as well go there tomorrow," Nancy decided, after a mental debate.

CHAPTER IX Vital Information

This must be the house. It certainly Þts the description given me.Ó

As she spoke Nancy Drew paused before a square, one-story frame building which stood dejectedly in the center of a yard overgrown with weeds and dandelions. The cottage was sadly in need of paint and pickets were missing from the sagging fence which enclosed it. A boardwalk which led to the front porch had begun to rot away, and offered treacherous footing.

when a slight noise within the house attracted her attention. She was certain her rap had been heard.

"Who's there?" a muffled voice called. "If you're a peddler I don't want anything."

"I'm not a peddler," Nancy called out reassuringly. "Won't you let me in, please?"

There was a long silence, and then the quavering voice replied:

"I can't open the door. I've hurt myself and can't walk."

Nancy hesitated an instant, and then pushed open the door. As she stepped into the dreary living room, she saw the pitiful figure on the couch. Abigail Rowen lay huddled under a ragged old shawl, her withered face drawn with pain.

"I am Nancy Drew and I've come to help you, Miss Rowen."

end would come. I'm getting along in years now and it won't be long——"

"Nonsense," Nancy protested brusquely, for she saw that the old lady's trouble had made her morose. "You have a good many happy years yet before you. Can you walk at all? Are you certain your hip isn't broken?"

"I can walk a little, but it hurts something awful when I do."

"Then your hip isn't broken," Nancy said, in relief. "Let me see your ankle. Why, you don't even have it wrapped up! Where are the bandages? I'll fix it for you."

"There's a white rag in the closet in the kitchen," Abigail told her.

Nancy shook her head sternly.

"A rag won't do. You have a bad sprain and it must be taken care of properly. You really should have a

"I'll be back in a few minutes," Nancy promised.

She stopped in the kitchen long enough to examine the cupboards. As she had suspected, they were practically empty. With the exception of a little flour and sugar and a cheap can of soup, there appeared to be nothing in the house to eat. Nancy discovered the money jar, but an investigation revealed that it contained less than five dollars.

"It's probably every cent poor Abigail has in the world," she thought.

Nancy did not take any money from the jar but quietly slipped out the back door. Hurrying to the roadster which she had left at the roadside, she drove to the nearest store and ordered nearly ten dollars worth of groceries. She wished that she might take a doctor back with her, but she realized that Abigail was set in her ways and would not accept the service since she could not pay for it.

Before she returned to the cottage, Nancy stopped

After the tea had steeped she poured Abigail a cup and urged her to eat the nourishing meal she had prepared. She was gratified to observe that almost immediately the old woman became more cheerful and seemed to gain strength. She sat up on the couch and appeared eager to talk with Nancy.

"There ain't many folks that are willing to help an old woman. If Josiah Crowley had lived things would have been different," she declared.

"It's strange that he didn't provide for you in his will," Nancy replied quietly.

She did not wish to excite the old woman by telling her real mission, and yet she was eager to find out what Abigail knew about the missing will. She hoped that she might lead her tactfully into a discussion of Josiah Crowley's affairs without raising hopes which might never be realized.

"It's my opinion that Josiah did provide for me," Miss Rowen returned impressively. "Many a time

"Mind, I didn't see what was *in* the will. One day Josiah came in where I was sitting in my rocking chair, and right off I noticed he had a piece of paper in his hand. 'Abigail,' he said, 'I've made my will. I fooled them lawyers and wrote it myself.' "

"How long ago was that?" Nancy asked quickly.

"Let me see," Abigail frowned thoughtfully. "No, I can't remember the exact date. It was about the time Josiah went to live with Richard and Cora. Well, to go on with what I was saying—when Josiah showed me the will he seemed mighty tickled about it. Mind, he didn't show me what was inside but he hinted that he'd done well by me. 'But Josiah,' I said to him, 'are you sure it's legal to write it yourself?' 'Of course it is,' he said to me. 'A lawyer told me it was all right just so long as I had it witnessed.' "

"Do you know who witnessed the will?" Nancy broke in.

shook her head and sighed. “Many a night I’ve laid awake trying to think what it was.”

It seemed to Nancy that as victory was almost within her grasp, it had been snatched from her. Undoubtedly, Abigail Bowen held the secret of the Crowley will locked in her brain. And it was equally likely that she would never be able to recall the vital information unless in some unusual way her memory was given a particular stimulus.

“Try to think!” Nancy begged.

“I can’t remember,” Abigail murmured hopelessly. “I’ve tried and tried.” She leaned against the cushions and closed her eyes, as though the effort had exhausted her.

At that very moment the clock on the mantel chimed three. Abigail Rowen’s eyes fluttered open

CHAPTER X AbigailÕs Disclosure

When the mantel clock Þnished striking the hour of three, Abigail RowenÕs lips began to move. Nancy Drew leaned forward eagerly, fearful lest a single word escape her. She sensed that the striking of the clock at a psychological moment had started a train of thought coursing through the old womanÕs mind, and now she believed that an important disclosure was about to be

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made.

ÒThe clock,Ó Abigail whispered so softly that the words

"Tell me," Nancy commanded quietly, for she feared that the knowledge might slip from the old lady before she could disclose it.

"A notebook!" Abigail brought out triumphantly. "It was something about a notebook!"

"Tell me more about the notebook," Nancy urged gently. Although she could scarcely hide her eagerness, she forced herself to speak quietly lest she excite Miss Bowen.

"I remember it all now. Josiah wrote about the will in a little notebook of his. One day he said to me: 'Abigail, after I'm dead if my will doesn't come to light, you can find out all about it in this little book of mine.' "

"What became of the notebook, Miss Bowen?"
"I can't seem to recollect. He hid it someplace."
Again Nancy Drew was baffled. Involuntarily, her eyes

"Where was Josiah Crowley living at the time he told you about the notebook?" she asked the old lady.

"He was living in his own house then, but he was just getting ready to go to the Tophams. He'd been visiting around with his various kin and letting his own house stay empty. After the Tophams asked him to live with them, he sold his home."

"What became of the household goods?" Nancy inquired. "Oh, the Tophams got 'most everything."
"There must have been a family clock," Nancy mused,

half to herself.
"A family clock?" Abigail repeated. "Oh, yes, there was

a clock."
"Can you describe it?" Nancy questioned.
"Well, it was just an ordinary mantel clock, tall, and with

She asked a number of other questions, but it was soon apparent that Abigail had told all that she could recall about the will. Although Nancy spoke of the family clock a number of times, its mention did not seem to interest the old lady.

At last Nancy arose to depart, but before leaving she promised Abigail she would return in a few days to see how she was getting along. It was likewise her intention to stop at the nearest house to ask a neighbor woman to look after the old lady during her absence, but she said nothing of this, as she knew Abigail would protest.

After attending to the mission, she sprang into her roadster and started for River Heights.

Nancy Drew was highly elated at the information she had gleaned, and was now more interested in the case than ever.

"I'll not tell the Horner girls what I have learned," Nancy advised herself. "At least not until I have

Nancy was at a loss to know how to proceed. She knew that her next step in unraveling the mystery was to search the Crowley clock, but this would not be easy to accomplish. If, as Abigail had indicated, the clock had fallen into the hands of the Tophams, the task might be an impossible one. Then, too, it was not at all unlikely that the Tophams had already discovered the notebook.

"In that case they would have destroyed it," Nancy told herself. "Still, from the conversation I overheard in the park, I feel reasonably certain the notebook has never been found. No, if Josiah Crowley ever hid it in the clock, it must still be there, and it's up to me to get hold of it!"

During the long ride to River Heights, Nancy Drew mulled over the perplexing problem, but try as she would she could think of no way to get her hands on the old clock. She must find some means of gaining entrance to the Topham residence!

"I can't very well climb through a window much

"Hello, Nancy," Helen called. "I haven't seen you for days. Where do you keep yourself?"

Nancy laughed as she greeted her chum.

"Oh, I've been especially busy lately. Come into the house and we'll have a chat."

"Oh, I can't, Nancy. I wouldn't be up this way, but I'm trying to sell tickets for a charity dance."

"How many have you sold?"
"I have six left." Helen sighed. "It's a thankless job." "I'll take two if that will help you out," Nancy offered. "Will it help me? Say, if I ever get rid of these tickets I'm

going to dance a hornpipe. If I don't sell them this afternoon it's going to fix it so I can't start for Moon Lake. I wish I'd never promised to sell the things!"

"Moon Lake?" Nancy asked, in surprise.

“You are in difficulties,” Nancy laughed. She reached in her purse. “How much are the tickets, Helen?”

“Two dollars each. How many will you take?”
“Oh, give me two.”
As Helen extended the tickets, a sudden thought struck

Nancy Drew. A pleased light broke over her face. “I have an idea, Helen! I’ll sell all of your tickets for

you! How will that suit you?”
“You’re not joking?”
“Never was more serious in my life.”
“Then the tickets are yours. But let me warn you it won’t

be easy to sell them.”
“I’ll enjoy trying it.”
“Well, I must say you have queer ideas of fun,” Helen

CHAPTER XI Visiting the Tophams

It was nearly three oÕclock of the following afternoon when Nancy Drew paused in front of the Topham residence on Highland Boulevard. She surveyed the structure with distaste.

The house was a large, pretentious affair of nondescript type. It was set back from the street and seemed to

the most important social functions of the year. I am sure Mrs. Topham will wish to attend."

Nancy was forced to wait until the butler returned with permission for her to enter. As she was finally ushered into the living room, she could not help but smile at the elaborate formality, for in spite of Mrs. Topham's lofty ambitions, the woman had never achieved the commanding position in society that she strove for.

The room in which Nancy found herself was even more bizarre than she had anticipated. Expensive oriental rugs clashed with window draperies of a different hue. The walls were heavy with paintings which were entirely out of place in such a small room, and period furniture had been added indiscriminately.

But Nancy Drew was not interested in Mrs. Topham's lack of taste. As soon as the butler had left her alone she hastily glanced about. Almost at

"I don't want them!" Mrs. Topham broke in rudely. "I can't be handing out my money to every peddler that comes along."

"Mrs. Topham, I am not a peddler," Nancy said cuttingly, as the color mounted to her cheeks. With difficulty she kept her temper in check. "Perhaps you didn't understand my name. I am Nancy Drew."

"Oh." A slight change came over Mrs. Topham's face, for she was fully aware that Carson Drew and his daughter were cordially welcomed in River Heights homes which merely tolerated the Tophams or, in a few cases, barred them. "I didn't catch the name, Miss Drew. What is it you are selling?"

"Tickets for the charity dance."
"Well, I hardly know what to say," Mrs. Topham hedged. It was apparent that she was afraid to offend Nancy, and

and were angry because some woman had refused to see them.

“Her maid said she wasn’t at home, but I know she was,” Nancy heard Ada complain.

The two sisters entered the living room, and when they saw Nancy stopped short and stared rudely at her. They did not speak a word of greeting.

“Miss Drew is selling tickets to a dance,” Mrs. Topham informed her daughters.

“Don’t buy them,” Ada advised harshly. She had not forgotten the scene in the department store and longed to avenge herself upon Nancy, whom she considered responsible for her humiliation.

“But, Ada,” Mrs. Topham protested feebly, “I thought it might help our social standing to take a few tickets.”

“Don’t be silly, mother,” Ada snapped. “You’ll only waste your money. We don’t want to go

THE SECRET OF THE OLD CLOCK

With a grand gesture, Richard Topham opened his pocketbook and carelessly pulled out a twenty dollar bill.

“Keep the change,” he ordered with assumed indifference. “Give it to the charity.”

“Richard!” his wife gazed at him with disapproval. “Have you lost your mind? A twenty dollar bill!” she whispered.

“It’s you who can’t see beyond your nose,” Mr. Topham retorted, but in a low voice. “You’re always trying to get into society, and then you pass up a real opportunity. This donation will get our names into the paper.”

He slumped into the nearest chair, and, opening the afternoon paper, buried himself in the stock page. Mrs. Topham knew that the matter was closed, for she scarcely dared speak to her husband when he was absorbed in the market reports. Nancy, too, realized that she had no excuse for prolonging her

"Indeed? But I suppose you still have the family clock stored away in your attic. It's so hard to part with heirlooms." Cleverly, Nancy led Mrs. Topham to further disclosures.

"It wasn't hard to part with that old-fashioned thing," Mrs. Topham returned.

"We didn't want it cluttering up the attic," Isabel added. "Crowley left so much old junk."

"We considered the clock entirely out of place in our modern home," Mrs. Topham continued; "so we sent it up to our bungalow on Moon Lake."

Unwittingly, Mrs. Topham had given Nancy the information which she sought. The purpose of her visit accomplished, the girl politely thanked the Tophams for the purchase of the charity tickets and quickly took her leave.

As she walked down the path to the street she

CHAPTER XII Following a Clue

Although highly elated at what she had learned from the Tophams, Nancy Drew was at a loss to know how to proceed. Undoubtedly, the old Crowley clock was set up in the bungalow at Moon Lake, but to get there was another matter. Nancy was determined to profit by the information, but was confronted with a number of serious problems.

Moon Lake was located among the hills forty miles away, and the roads were not of the best. Nancy did not know the exact location of the Topham cottage.

"Just the same, I believe you need a vacation. I realize that it isn't easy for a girl your age to look after a big house like this. After a time, the responsibility gets to be wearing."

"How stupid of me!" Nancy exclaimed.

In her excitement, she permitted a fork to fall from her hand and clatter against the plate. Carson Drew, who did not comprehend what was passing through his daughter's mind, looked at her in surprise.

"Stupid?" he inquired.

"Oh, I mean it was strange I didn't think of Helen Corning before this," Nancy said hastily. "Helen is going to a girls' camp on Moon Lake. I'm dying to go to Moon Lake! May I start the first thing in the morning? I know I can get in. They have room for half a dozen more girls, Helen said."

"I think it would be an excellent idea, Nancy. A nice rest will do wonders for you. Go, by all

"Oh, it's my chickens, Nancy. They're all dying. I can't understand it. This morning when I went to feed them I found ten dead. I'm so discouraged."

"And yesterday a fox took two," Grace added. "I guess fate is against us."

"I'm afraid I'll lose all of my chickens before I get through," Allie declared unhappily. "I don't know what is killing them. They seem to have a strange disease."

"Allie is all broken up," Grace said quietly. "She's worked so hard with her chickens. Most of them are pets. And then, we need the money so badly. Now that dressmaking has fallen off, the chicken money is our only means of support."

"Please, won't you let me help?" Nancy begged reaching for her pocketbook. "Accept a little loan to tide you over?"

Grace shook her head firmly.

"Oh, Nancy, I can't thank you— —"

"It is I who should thank you," Nancy laughed. "And now let me pay for the dress in advance."

Again Grace stubbornly shook her head. "Not until the work is finished. That isn't good business." Nancy saw that Grace and Allie were too proud to accept

help, and regretfully abandoned the idea of trying to give them money.

"I'll come back in a few days for a fitting," she promised, as she prepared to drive away.

Nancy's talk with the Horner girls had left her rather depressed, for she realized that in spite of their pride, Allie and Grace would soon be forced to accept charity. Oh, if only she could help them!

"And poor old Abigail," Nancy thought. "If Josiah Crowley had used a grain of sense, things wouldn't be in such a muddle."

"A puncture!" Nancy murmured in disgust. "If that isn't just my luck! Oh, well, I suppose I must fix it myself, because there won't be another car along for an hour on this road."

It was not the first time Nancy Drew had changed a tire, but she never relished the task. Rummaging under the seat, she pulled out the tools and quickly jacked up the rear axle. She loosened the lugs which held the tire in place, and tugged at it. Again and again she pulled, but the huge balloon tire could not be budged. Then, as she gave one mighty tug, it came off and Nancy Drew fell backwards into a sitting posture in the road.

"Well, it's off, anyway," she told herself with satisfaction, as she brushed the dirt from her clothing.

It required but a few minutes to put on the spare tire and fasten the old one to the rear of the car. Then, in relief, Nancy started on her way again, but the accident had delayed her nearly an hour.

“You’re just in time,” Helen assured her. “Oh, Nancy, I’m so glad you came.”

“So am I.”
“How long can you stay?”
“Oh, I don’t know. Until you get tired of me probably.” “Then you’ll stay for the rest of the summer,” Helen

laughed.
Nancy was escorted to the main building of the camp,

where she met the lady in charge and registered.
“She is to stay with me,” said Helen; and so it was

arranged.
When the girls walked off Nancy told Helen about

selling the charity dance tickets and gave her the money paid by Mr. Topham.

“He surely was generous,” said Helen, in surprise.

"Either that or I'll be a wreck."

"But you don't want to miss the launch ride, Nancy. You'll have a splendid opportunity to see all the summer cottages on Moon Lake."

"Summer cottages?" Nancy asked quickly. Instantly she thought of the Topham bungalow and wondered where it was located. Undoubtedly, the launch ride would give her the opportunity to find out.

"You'll go, won't you?" Helen begged. "You can rest after supper."

"Yes, I'll go," Nancy promised. "You couldn't keep me here."

Although she was tired, she was really enjoying herself immensely.

Six girls loaded themselves into the launch and someone started the motor.

"Is it hard to get to the place?"

"Oh, not if you go by launch. But it's a long way if you take the road around the lake. I didn't know you were particularly interested in the Tophams, Nancy."

"Oh, they're no friends of mine," Nancy returned hastily. "I was merely curious."

After a time, as the launch chugged along close to the shore, Helen waved her hand toward a bungalow which was set back some distance from the water.

"The Tophams own that one," she informed her chum.

Eagerly, Nancy turned her head and looked. She told herself that she would remember the location.

"We're going to have a wonderful time here together," Helen chatted happily on. "Next week

CHAPTER XIII An Adventure

Nancy Drew had made up her mind to visit the Topham cottage the very next day, but in making her plans she had counted without Helen Corning and her friends. They were unwilling that she should be alone even for a minute.

From the moment she awoke in the morning and sniffed the fragrant odor of the pines, she was rushed from one thing to another. After a breakfast of fruit, fried eggs, crisp bacon, and hot corn bread, she was pressed into a tennis game. The afternoon

"Oh, no!" Nancy protested vigorously. "I won't let you do that! You like to hike so well. Please go on. I'll have a good time all by myself. Really, I will."

"I don't like to leave you, Nancy. But if you insist — —"

"I do, Helen. Please don't worry about me. I'll have a good time here. If you don't mind, I may take the launch out while you're gone."

"If you do, you'd better not go far," Helen advised her. "We girls bought it secondhand for a song, and it's my private opinion the engine isn't much good."

"I'll be careful," Nancy promised.

She could scarcely hide her eagerness to be off, but she was forced to wait until Helen and her friends had started on their hike. It seemed to Nancy that they would never leave, but at last they trudged away with their knapsacks slung over their

Cutting down the motor, Nancy steered out into deep water. At first she followed the shore, but as she became more familiar with the wheel and as the engine appeared to work perfectly, she headed out into the lake.

Nancy experienced a real thrill as the little launch responded to her hand. The lake was as smooth as glass, and there was scarcely a cloud in the sky. As the launch cut through the water a tiny spray blew in Nancy's face, but she did not mind.

Far ahead she could see the opposite shore, and she headed straight for the point where she knew the Topham bungalow was located.

"If only the caretaker will let me in when I get there!" she thought, as she drew near her objective point.

But she was doomed never to reach the opposite shore that day, for unexpectedly there was a miss in the steady throb of the engine. The motor gave one

bungalow, which appeared deserted, but miles from her own camp.

For nearly an hour she worked over the engine, but her efforts were useless. The stubborn motor refused to start.

"I'll have to sit out here all day," Nancy thought miserably. "This means I won't get to visit the Topham cottage after all!"

It was especially tantalizing to be so close to the bungalow and yet know that she could not reach it. Nancy was tempted to swim, but she gave up the idea almost as quickly as it occurred to her, for she realized that even if she reached the Topham bungalow she would have no means of returning to camp. She decided that it would be better to remain on the lake and wait for a passing boat to rescue her.

Slowly the hours dragged on, and the launch drifted farther and farther from shore. Never had

For want of other occupation, Nancy turned her attention again to the engine. When the sun sank into the water several hours later, she was still bending over it, a determined look in her eyes.

"There!" she muttered as she straightened up. "I've certainly done enough to it. If it won't go now, it never will."

She gave the wheel a vicious swing, and, to her astonishment, the engine began its steady roar as unconcerned as though it had never stopped.

"If that isn't the limit!" Nancy exclaimed in wonder.

Hopefully, she glanced toward the shore, but already shadows were beginning to lurk among the trees and she knew that in less than an hour it would be dark.

"It's too late to visit the bungalow to-night," she decided regretfully. "I'd better get back to camp

"It served me right, I guess. I should have gone on the hike."

But while Nancy made light of her adventure, she was disappointed. She had wasted a day, and time was precious. Would she ever reach the Topham bungalow? So far she had been thwarted at every

CHAPTER XIV An Exciting Discovery

"Nancy Drew, why are you packing that suitcase? YouÕre not leaving camp already?Ó

Helen Corning, entering the cabin which she shared with Nancy, stopped in the doorway and stared in amazement at her chum, who was folding wearing apparel carefully into her suitcase.

ÒIÕm afraid I must leave this afternoon,Ó Nancy admitted regretfully.

ÒBut youÕve been here only three days,Ó Helen

remained at camp she knew that Helen and her friends would not leave her alone for a minute. It would be impossible to visit the Topham bungalow on the opposite side of the lake without offering explanations, and Nancy was unwilling to disclose the purpose of her trip.

In spite of Helen's teasing, she remained firm in her decision to leave camp. Directly after luncheon she slung her suitcase into the roadster and took leave of the girls. Regretfully, they watched her go.

"Now, if only I can find my way to the Topham bungalow," Nancy thought.

The previous day she had casually inquired from Helen which road led to the Topham bungalow, but the directions had been rather hazy. Coming to a fork, she selected the left hand road which appeared to circle the lake. As Helen had indicated, it was winding and narrow, and richly sprinkled with sharp rocks.

As she drove along, she noticed a number of summer cottages, but as the season was late nearly all were boarded up. At last she came within sight of a clearing, and through the trees caught a glimpse of the Topham bungalow.

"I hope I'll find the caretaker," she thought. "I'd certainly hate to go back without seeing him."

Not without a feeling of anxiety, she stopped the roadster at the edge of the road. To her surprise, she observed that the tracks made by the truck did not continue further. Apparently, the truck had turned in toward the bungalow. Nancy hurried up the path. As she emerged from among the trees, she stopped short and stared ahead in amazement.

The entire camp was in disorder. The front door of the bungalow had been flung wide open and the side doors were likewise ajar.

An overturned chair had been dropped carelessly on the porch, and a trail of knickknacks stretched

"These marks couldn't have been made more than an hour ago, at the latest," she decided.

As she hurried on up the path, it appeared to Nancy that the camp was deserted. There was no sign of Jeff Tucker, the colored caretaker in whose care the bungalow had been entrusted.

Reaching the veranda, Nancy knocked loudly on the door. When there was no response, she boldly entered.

"What can this mean?" she asked herself in dismay, as she stared at the sight before her.

The living room was in confusion. Save for a few pieces, it was bare of furniture. Even the draperies and curtains had been ripped from their rods. The rugs were missing, as was everything else of value.

To Nancy's astonishment she found that with the exception of one room the entire house had been ransacked. Only one bedroom had been left

What had become of Jeff Tucker, the colored man who had been left in charge of the Topham bungalow? The place seemed deserted.

Nancy realized that the Topham bungalow, which had been expensively furnished, would offer a rich prize for thieves. Now, as she viewed the evidence, the suspicion which lurked in her mind developed into firm conviction. She was certain that robbers had ransacked the place, carrying off nearly everything of value.

"They must have taken the Crowley clock too," Nancy told herself with a sinking heart. "If they have, I'll never set eyes on it!"

A feeling of desperation came over the girl as she realized that again she had been thwarted. It seemed almost as though a cruel fate had ordained that the mystery of the missing Crowley will should forever remain unsolved.

"It's barely possible the robbers overlooked the

As the thought occurred to her, she glanced uneasily over her shoulder. She realized that she was buried in a wilderness some miles from the nearest house, and the knowledge that unscrupulous men were in the vicinity was anything but reassuring.

“What if those robbers should still be around here?” flashed through her mind.

As Nancy Drew listened tensely, the very silence of the empty house was startling. A strange feeling came over her.

CHAPTER XV
A Desperate Situation

How silly of me to be afraid!Ó Nancy Drew laughed nervously. ÒProbably there isnÕt a person within miles of here!Ó

As she glanced about the bungalow it was with relief that she assured herself the place was deserted. Yet, for some reason, she was unable to free herself entirely from the feeling that an unseen danger lurked in wait for her. The very walls seemed to smirk and grimace at her and there was an ominous something in the air.

Only an instant did the girl hesitate. Then she turned and ran back into the bedroom. Too late she saw that she had trapped herself, for this room had no outside door.

Nancy started back toward the living room, but before she had taken half a dozen steps she realized that her escape had been cut off from that direction. The man had reached the veranda steps.

Frantically, she glanced about for a hiding place. The bedroom closet offered the only possible refuge, and with scarcely an instant's hesitation she stepped into it and closed the door behind her.

Nancy was not a minute too soon. Scarcely had she shut the door when she heard the heavy tread of a man's hobnail shoes on the floor. Peeping cautiously out through a tiny crack in the door, she saw a rough-looking man come into the bedroom. His face was cold and cruel.

As he turned toward the closet where she huddled,

"Only an old fur cap," she told herself, in disgust, "and probably full of moths. Gracious, now I feel like sneezing worse than ever!"

She held her hand over her mouth hard and waited in agony. But presently the desire to sneeze passed and Nancy breathed more freely.

When she dared to peep out through the crack a second time, she saw that two other men had come into the room. From their appearance she knew that they must be members of the robber gang. The first man seemed to be their leader, for he proceeded to issue orders.

"Get a move on!" he growled. "We haven't got all day unless we want to be caught. Take that dresser out of here first."

The two men lifted the heavy piece of furniture and started with it to the door. But they did not move swiftly enough to satisfy the leader, and he berated them savagely.

“Well, I guess we have everything now,” the leader muttered at last.

He turned to follow his companions, who already had gone to the truck, but in the doorway paused for a last careful survey of the room.

At that fateful moment there came a muffled sneeze from the closet.

The robber wheeled about. Walking directly to the closet, he flung open the door and exposed poor Nancy, who was crouching in the far corner. Angrily, he jerked her out.

“Spying on us, eh?” he snarled.
Nancy Drew eyed the man defiantly.
“I wasn’t spying.”
“Then what were you doing in that closet?”
“I came to see the caretaker.”
“Looking for him in a funny place, ain’t you?” sneered

she could expect no mercy. The hopelessness of her situation gave her the courage to defy him.

"I didn't hear much, but I saw plenty!" she cried. "You're nothing but a common thief, and if I get the chance I'll turn you and your gang over to the police!"

"If you get the chance—that's good." The robber laughed mirthlessly. "I'll do with you as I did the caretaker."

"The caretaker!" Nancy gasped in horror. "What have you done with him?"

"You'll find out all in good time."

The man held Nancy's wrists in a viselike grip. Her efforts to free herself were of no avail.

"It won't do you any good to try to get away," her captor informed her.

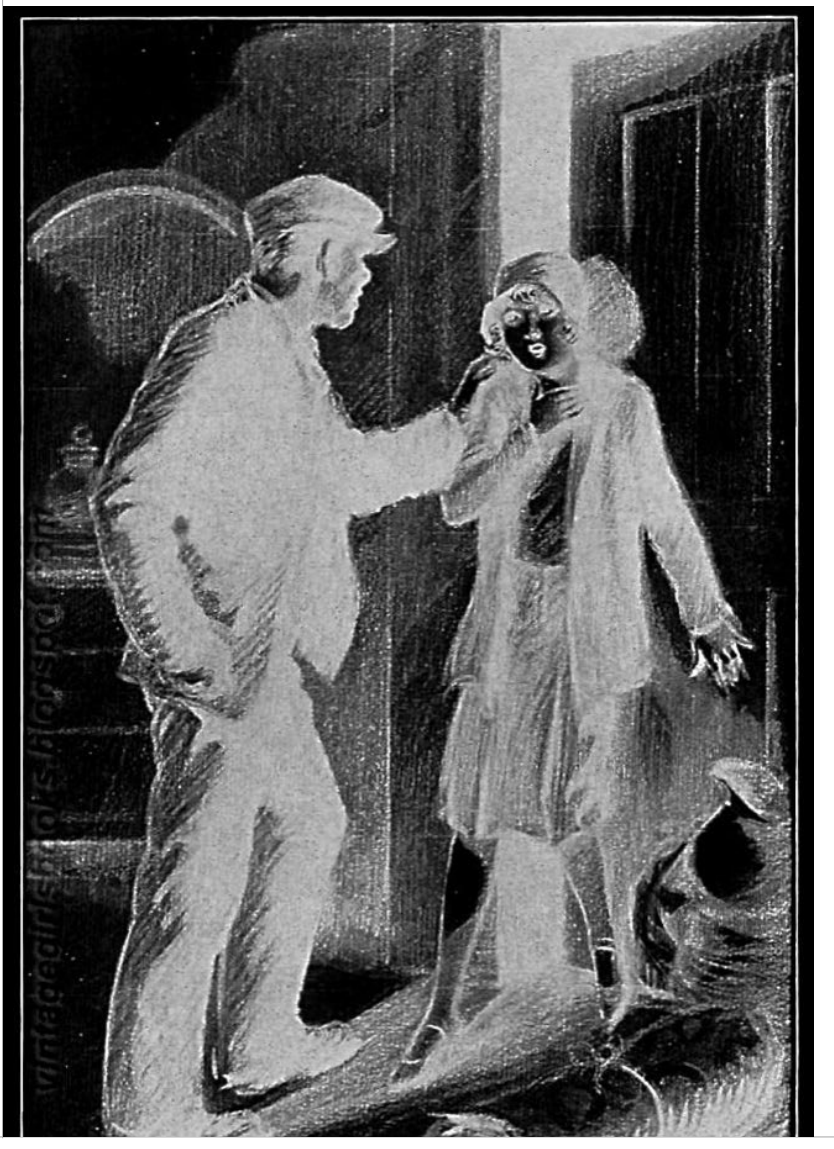
Nancy was desperate. Suddenly, utilizing every

Nancy heard a key turn in the lock. The sliding of a bolt into place followed.

“Now you can starve for all I care!” the man laughed harshly.

Then the steady tramp of his heavy boots across the floor told Nancy Drew that he had left the house.

THE SECRET OF THE OLD CLOCK



ÒHelp! Help!Ó she screamed.

CHAPTER XVI Left to Starve

When the sound of the footsteps had died away, Nancy Drew was overcome with panic. A feeling of desperation came over her. She realized that the robber had dared to carry out his ugly threat. He had locked her in the closet and had left her there to

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starve.

At Þrst Nancy was too frightened to think logically. She

she again raised her voice and shouted for help. Her cries echoed through the empty house and seemed to mock her.

"Oh, why didn't I have sense enough to tell Helen Corning where I was going!" she thought miserably. "She believed I was starting for home. The girls will never dream that I came here."

And her father thought that she intended to remain at the camp for a week! He would not become alarmed over her absence until it was too late. Oh, if only she had never left her home in River Heights!

"Someone may find my roadster at the side of the road," Nancy reasoned, "but it isn't very likely. Few persons pass this way so late in the season."

What had become of Jeff Tucker, the caretaker? Certainly she could expect no aid from that quarter. The robber had hinted that he had done away with the old colored man, and, knowing the character of

the darkness she could not see and she made little progress. After fifteen minutes she gave the task up in disgust.

"It's no use," she decided miserably, "I'm afraid I'll never get out."

She began to think of her father, of Helen Corning, and other dear friends. Would she ever see them again? As despondency claimed Nancy she was dangerously near tears. Resolutely, she tried to shake off the mood.

"This will never do," she told herself sternly. "Surely, there is a way to get out of here. I must keep my head and try to think of something."

After a time, as a new idea occurred to the girl, she began to rummage about in the closet, hoping that by some lucky chance she might find a tool which would help her force the lock of the door. She searched carefully through the pockets of every garment which hung from the hooks. She groped

She tugged at the rod with all her might. To her satisfaction, one side gave. Another hard jerk brought the rod down on her head.

To her bitter disappointment, Nancy found as she examined the rod that it was too long to use as a ram. But after a little experimentation, she discovered that she could press it into service as a wedge.

Inserting it in the crack between the hinges, she threw all of her weight against the rod. At first the door did not budge.

"Archimedes didn't know what he was talking about when he said the world could be moved with a lever," Nancy murmured. "I'd like to see him move this door!"

As she applied steady pressure to the rod a second time, she saw that the hinges were beginning to give. Encouraged, she applied more force.

Frantically, Nancy rattled the door knob.

“Oh, you is a caged lion, dis time,” a rather unsteady voice remarked. “You is one o’ dese tough robber boys, is you? Well, you won’t do no mo’ pilferrin’, ’cause I done got you surrounded.”

“Let me out!” Nancy pleaded. “I’m not a robber!”

The sound of a feminine voice coming from the closet nonplussed the man.

“Say, robber boy, is you imitatin’ a lady’s voice to th’o’ me off de scent? If you is, it won’t do no good ’cause I’s a natural-born, two-legged blood houn’.”

Nancy thought of a way to convince him. She let go her longest and loudest feminine scream.

“Dat’s enough! Hold yo’ siren! I’ll let you out. Dar ain’t a man in de world could make a racket like dat! Dis way out, lady!”

CHAPTER XVII Jeff TuckerÕs Story

There was another long wait and then, to her relief, Nancy Drew heard a key turn in the look and then a bolt shot back. Quickly she pushed the closet door open and stepped out into the light.

She stood face to face with Jeff Tucker, the colored caretaker employed by the Tophams. The robbers had led her to believe that they had harmed the old fellow, and Nancy was glad to see him well and happyÑalbeit a little too happy, for Jeff Tucker

"The most definite information I can give you," she said, "is that some robbers carted it away. If you had been here attending to your duty, it would never have happened."

" 'At's right! 'At's right! Blame me! I ain't s'posed to be no standin' ahmy—I's just a plain culled man with a wife and seven chillun a-dependin' on me. No mom! I ain't havin' no truck wit' dem machine-gun boys!"

Jeff paused and passed his hand over his forehead as if he were trying to wipe away the alcoholic cobwebs that were accumulating about his perceptive faculties. Then suddenly he pointed a bony finger at Nancy and demanded:

"How come you heah?"

"That's a fine question for you to ask!" replied Nancy indulgently. "But I don't mind telling you. I arrived just as the robbers were hauling off the last of the furniture. They locked me in the closet. I

o' all dis truck from mornin' till night. It ain't such an excitin' life, Miss, and while I's done sowed all mah wild oats, I still sows a little rye now and den."

"Yes, Jeff—I can smell that on your breath right now."

Jeff wiped the back of his hand over his mouth in an apparent effort to keep his rye-laden breath from being propagated into the atmosphere.

"You cain't blame me, Miss," he protested. "*He* give it to me."

"Who is this 'he'?"

"Why, dat white man who drives up in de big see-dan. He sees me out thah and knows how lonesome and useless I feels, so he says: 'Jeff, hop in. I know a place where!' So in I hops. Course I locked up dis heah house and de bahn and seen dat everything was safe."

de house is done been pilfehed. Den I tries to recollect what done come to pass and I gets s'picious. I says to myself, 'Jeff, how come dat white man so friendly? How come he give you drinks dat costs fo' dollars a pint. How come you ain't got no keys? Black boy, bestir yo'-self.' And here I is!"

"Oh, yes, you're here all right," Nancy returned severely. "And a fine mess you've made of it, too. What do you think Mrs. Topham will say when she learns?"

Jeff rolled his eyes.

"Lawdy, Miss! What *will* she say? I reckon I's done gone and discharged myself."

"It would be only what you deserve, Jeff. You were unfaithful to your trust."

"What you mean, Miss, trust? I don't trust nobody no mo'—especially no foot-loose white boys a-

"Then we shall have to go to town as quickly as we can in my car. Do you suppose that you would recognize the man who enticed you away, Jeff?"

"Say, would I 'member him? I'd recognize dat man in a bootleggah's convention. He was tall an' slick-lookin' with a kind of a 'gimme' look in his eyes. Yes mom! I suah would know dat baby!"

Before leading the way to her roadster, Nancy Drew thought of the old Crowley clock again and all that it might mean in the solving of the mystery of the will. Jeff, as caretaker, would surely know whether or not it was in the bungalow before the robbery.

"Tell me something, Jeff," she said. "Was there an old clock in the house—a tall, square-faced, mantel clock?"

"Yes, Miss. But all I ever done to it was dust it. I never wound it up to see if it would run. I's got a watch o' my own." Jeff punctuated his remarks by

She must recover the clock! And there was only one way. The thieves must be apprehended and the stolen good returned. With this thought in her mind, she rushed out toward her roadster, calling to Jeff to follow.

“I’s a-comin Miss,” Jeff called. “Just a minute!”

He half-hobbled off behind the house out of Nancy’s sight, while she sat waiting impatiently in her roadster. She started the engine and warmed it up, but Jeff still failed to return.

She called to him, but there was no response. Finally, she could stand the suspense no longer. Jumping to the ground, she set off to find out what had become of the old scamp.

She found Jeff leisurely performing an elaborate facial ablution at the cistern pump. He would pump his hands full of water and then, with a great spluttering noise, dash it against his face.

Crowley clock was now and whether she would ever be able to recover it from the thieves.

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CHAPTER XVIII Notifying the Police

It was probably fortunate for Nancy Drew that the trafÞc police were not patrolling the road, for as she opened the throttle wider and wider, her roadster responded with a surge of power that sent the car along at breath-taking speed.

ÒDis ole bus can suah step,Ó observed Jeff. Ò

"I must see an officer," Nancy announced as she entered the office. "I want to report a robbery."

A buzzer rang and soon a marshal, followed by several men, entered. Nancy quickly told them all she know about the Topham robbery, and to corroborate what she had said, she called Jeff for his version.

"She speaks de troof," testified Jeff, " 'cept she don't make it strong enough. First thing dey kidnaps me so I won't be around to raise no ruckus. Den dey gives me some kind of a sleepin' powdah and pahks me in a ho-tel. But I comes to and goes back, and dar I find dis gu'l cooped up in a closet just as she told you. And dey wrecked Mis' Topham's house and stole all de furniture."

The marshal and his men listened attentively, and plied Nancy with questions to clear up certain points.

"Have you any idea which road they took?" the

"Hurry!" Nancy begged as she turned toward the door. "Those men have nearly an hour's start of us now!"

Hastily, she ran to the street and sprang into the roadster. Starting the motor, she waited impatiently for the marshal and his men to appear. After a seemingly interminable wait, they came out, buckling on holsters.

They piled into the "police car" which stood at the curbing and the marshal took the wheel. After several unsuccessful attempts he started the motor. Jeff Tucker, who had followed the men from the office, would have inflicted his person upon the already overburdened car, but as he attempted to gain the running board, he was forced gently but firmly back upon the sidewalk.

"Follow me!" Nancy cried to the marshal.

Shifting gears, she started off down the road. At the corner she looked back to see that the police car

The marshal and his deputies sprang from their automobile and began to examine the tracks in the road. But if a moving van had passed that way, the tire marks had been obliterated by other vehicles. There was no clue to indicate which route the robbers had selected.

"They must have taken the righthand fork," the marshal hazarded.

Nancy shook her head doubtfully.

"Doesn't the lefthand road lead to Garwin?" The marshal nodded.

"Then it strikes me the robbers would have taken that road. It seems reasonable that they would head for a large city where they could dispose of the stolen goods."

"Maybe you're right," the marshal admitted reluctantly.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," Nancy proposed, as

"I'm sure I'm on the right trail," she told herself. "That other road doesn't lead anywhere in particular."

After she had traveled several miles, Nancy became less confident. Although she had passed a number of side roads, she had kept to the main highway, and she realized that it would have been easy for the moving van to elude pursuit by taking any one of the branches.

"Still, the robbers can't know that they are being followed," she reasoned. "It's likely they'll be off their guard."

Fifteen minutes passed, and Nancy began to fear that after all she had selected the wrong road at the fork. Presently, as she noticed a man with a team of horses approaching, she determined to question him.

"Have you seen a large moving van on this road?" she called out as she stopped the roadster alongside

Nancy Drew recalled the fact that she had passed a roadhouse less than a mile back, and it occurred to her that possibly the robbers had stopped there.

"I'll go back there and make inquiry," she thought. "I haven't gone by a single cross road since I talked with that farmer, so if the robbers didn't stop at the roadhouse I can't imagine what became of them. If they were on this road I am certain I would have passed them by this time."

Dusk was approaching, and Nancy Drew knew that if she were ever to find the robbers it must be within the next hour. Skillfully, she turned the roadster around in the road. A few minutes of fast driving brought her within sight of the roadhouse.

The place was of disreputable appearance, and Nancy suspected that it might be a bad resort to visit. It stood back from the road a short distance, and was half-hidden by tall trees. The building was large and rambling, but rather old and sadly in need of paint. A sign on the gate read: "The Black

As she drew near the inn, Nancy approached cautiously. As she stepped upon the veranda, coarse laughter reached her ears. She tiptoed to a window and peered inside. What she saw caused her to start in surprise.

In a dingy, dimly lighted room, three men were seated about a table, obviously engaged in a

CHAPTER XIX A Risky Undertaking

I must notify the marshal at once!Ó Nancy Drew told herself as she recognized the three robbers. Turning away from the window, she crept noiselessly from the porch and as soon as she was a safe distance from the inn, broke into a run. As she stepped into her roadster, a sudden thought occurred to her.

As she opened the stable door, it squeaked in an alarming fashion. Anxiously, she glanced toward the inn, but so far as she could tell her actions were unobserved. There was no one in sight.

Flinging the door wide, the girl peered hopefully into the dark interior. A low cry escaped from her lips.

There in front of her stood the moving van!

“What a piece of luck!” she exclaimed, as she viewed the truck which the robbers had left in the barn. “Now if I can only find the clock!”

With a last cautious glance in the direction of the roadhouse, she hastily closed the barn door lest it swing in the wind and attract attention. With the doors shut, the interior of the barn was dark.

As Nancy switched on her automobile flashlight and played it over the moving van, she was disappointed to note that it was a covered one. The

"Perhaps the keys were left in the ignition switch," she thought hopefully.

She rushed to the front of the van and clambered into the driver's seat. An examination of the dashboard did not reveal the keys hanging from the ignition switch.

"The robbers must have taken the keys with them," she told herself.

Nancy was discouraged. She was on the point of admitting defeat when a thought came to her.

Among her acquaintances there were a number of persons who upon occasion hid their automobile keys under the front seat. It was barely possible that the robbers had done likewise.

Nancy hastily pulled up the leather seat and looked underneath. A ray of her flashlight illuminated a small object in one corner. Eagerly, she snatched it up and saw that it was a key ring.

Dexterously, she swung herself up on the load. She flashed the light about on chairs, tables, rugs and boxes. There was no sign of the Crowley clock.

Then the beam rested for a moment upon an object in a far corner, and with a low cry of delight Nancy saw that her search had been rewarded. Protected by a blanket, an old fashioned mantel clock rested on top of a center table in the very front of the van!

She scrambled laboriously over odd pieces of furniture as she tried to reach the clock. Her dress caught on something sharp and tore, but Nancy did not heed it. She snatched at the blanket and swept the clock toward her.

One glance at the timepiece assured her that it fit the description Abigail Rowen had given her. It had a square face and the top was ornamented with a crescent. Nancy was almost certain that it was the Crowley clock.

But as she stood staring at it, her keen ears detected

Nancy slammed the truck doors shut and searched wildly for the keys.

“Oh, what did I do with them?” she thought frantically.

She saw that they had fallen from the door to the floor and snatched them up. Hurriedly inserting the right key in the lock, she secured the doors.

The deed was not accomplished a minute too soon. As Nancy wheeled about she distinctly heard the murmur of angry voices outside. The robbers were quarreling among themselves, and already someone was working at the fastening of the barn

THE SECRET OF THE OLD CLOCK

CHAPTER XX What Nancy Found

While Nancy Drew hesitated, uncertain which way to turn, her mind worked more clearly than ever before.

She realized instantly that she could not hope to run to the front of the car and place the keys under the seat where she had found them. Instead of attempting the impossible, she ßung them upon the ßoor.

"Then come and find them, and don't be all day about it, either!"

"All right. Get out of the way and give me a chance!"

As the second robber went to the truck and began a careful search for the keys, Nancy Drew crouched fearfully in her hiding place.

"I don't see what could have happened to them keys," the robber complained after an unsuccessful search. "I put 'em right under this seat."

"Say, if you've lost 'em—" the leader did not finish the threat, for at that moment the third robber stooped over and picked up something at his feet.

"Here they are on the floor! You must have put 'em in your pocket and dropped 'em out."

"I didn't!" the other retorted. "I never had them keys in my pocket."

before the van could be backed from the building, it was necessary for one of the men to get out and fasten them back.

In relief Nancy watched the men go. The moment they were a safe distance from the barn, she scrambled out of the manger.

She paused long enough to make certain that the van had taken the road to Garwin. Then, clutching the precious clock in her arms, she turned and ran.

As Nancy darted into the woods, she cast an anxious glance over her shoulder, but to her intense relief she saw that she was not being followed. There was no one to be seen in the vicinity of the roadhouse, and the big moving van was proceeding slowly on its way toward Garwin, the occupants oblivious that their whereabouts had been discovered.

"I had a narrow escape that time," Nancy told herself as she ran. "I hate to think of my fate if I

in the barn, she was almost certain it was the timepiece Abigail Rowen had described to her. If the old woman's story was correct, she would find Josiah Crowley's notebook inside.

Reaching the roadster and finding it exactly as she had left it, the girl sprang inside.

"I'll go for the police as fast as I can and send them after the robbers," she decided. "The Tophams don't deserve any consideration, but I couldn't be mean enough to sit quietly by and let them lose their household goods."

Then, as she was about to start the motor, her glance fell upon the Crowley clock which she had placed on the seat beside her. She was fairly overcome with curiosity to learn what it would reveal. As she hesitated, she found it impossible to resist the temptation of investigating it immediately, even at the cost of a few minutes delay.

Turning the clock upside down, she gave it a hard shake. Something rattled. Hopefully, she repeated the action. Unquestionably, there was something bulky inside.

“It must be the notebook!” Nancy thought in excitement. “Unless I’m wrong, it’s behind the face! How can I get it off?”

After a vain attempt to remove the heavy cardboard face with her fingers, she lifted the automobile seat and found a small tool with which she could pry. It then required but an instant to remove the two hands of the clock and jerk off the face.

As the cardboard fell to the floor, Nancy peered hopefully inside and gave a low cry of delight.

CHAPTER XXI Capturing the Robbers

Eagerly, Nancy Drew tore the little notebook from the hook. The light was dim, but by holding the book directly under the dashlight, she could make out the words on the cover: ÒThe Property of Josiah Crowley.Ó

ÒIÕve found it at last!Ó she cried.

Quickly turning the Þrst few pages, she saw that they were yellowed with age. The writing was Þne

was no sign of a light on the road. The moving van had disappeared.

"I must travel some now," Nancy told herself grimly. "Those robbers have at least ten minutes start, and I may have trouble finding the marshal and his deputies."

Bending low over the steering wheel, she deliberately stepped hard on the accelerator. The roadster leaped forward as though it, too, comprehended the need for haste.

"If those men reach Garwin before the marshal overtakes them, there won't be one chance in a hundred of capturing them," Nancy thought. "It was foolish of me to take time to look at the clock."

Presently reaching the fork in the road, she selected the right hand turn, and with undiminished speed rushed on. She had gone several miles beyond the fork when far ahead she caught sight of an

"Quick!" she called to the marshal. "The robbers have taken the road to Garwin! If you hurry you can overtake them! Go on and I'll follow!"

Without waiting for more, the marshal and his deputies drove off at top speed. The automobile rounded a bend and was lost to view.

For an instant Nancy Drew stood looking after it. Then, springing into her roadster, she, too, was off.

Following close behind the police car, the girl sped down the road in pursuit of the robbers. The two automobiles passed the roadhouse beyond the fork and raced toward Garwin.

"We should have overtaken the robbers by this time," Nancy told herself anxiously, after a number of miles had been traversed and still there was no sight of a moving van. "They can't have gone very far."

Ten minutes passed. Then, unexpectedly, she

The van did not stop. Instead, it put on additional speed and crowded the police car toward the ditch. Nancy's heart was in her mouth as she watched, for it seemed certain that the marshal and his deputies were doomed.

At the very edge of the road, the police car by a sudden spurt of speed forged ahead and averted disaster.

"Halt!" rang out the warning cry a second time. "Halt or we'll fire!"

There was a sharp crack of a revolver as the robbers fired the first shot.

The marshal and his deputies answered with a quick volley. One of the shots found its mark—the front tire. The van swerved in the road, and as the two side wheels went off into a steep ditch, toppled over.

In an instant the marshal and his men were out of

"There is the man who locked me up and left me to starve," she declared, pointing to the leader of the robber band. "And the stolen goods are in the van."

"They'll get ten or twenty years for this," the marshal promised. "We'll hold them on several charges. You are willing to testify against them, I suppose?"

"Yes, if it is necessary," Nancy promised reluctantly. "But I don't live in this county and I'm anxious to get home right away. It seems to me you have enough evidence to convict them."

"Well, if you don't want to I guess there's no need for you to go back with us," the marshal admitted. "I'll take your address and if your testimony should be required later I'll get in touch with you."

As Nancy told the marshal her name and address, he glanced at her with new interest.

"So you're the daughter of Carson Drew! I see

"I don't want a reward."

"Just the same you've earned one," the marshal insisted. "If you're shy about blowing your own horn, I'll take it up with this Mrs. Topham myself."

"You don't know her as well as I do," Nancy remarked. "She'll not offer a reward, and even if she did I wouldn't accept it. In fact, I must ask you not to mention my name to her at all."

"You don't want any credit for capturing the robbers?" the marshal gasped in astonishment.

"No, I would prefer that my name not be mentioned in connection with the affair. I have a particular reason for making the request."

"Well, you're a queer one," the marshal remarked. "You're the first person I ever saw who didn't want to take all the glory that was coming to him."

"You'll not mention my name?"

"Let's be getting away from here," the marshal directed briskly. He singled out one of the deputies. "You stay here and guard the stolen goods until we can send another truck after it. I'll see to it that these robbers land behind bars, and then I'll come back."

"Just a minute," Nancy interposed as the marshal was about to escort the three robbers to the police car. "I want to ask a few questions."

She turned to the leader of the robbers.

"It was you who stole the keys from Jeff Tucker after getting him drunk, wasn't it?"

"What if I did?" the robber growled. "I wish I'd finished him!"

Unceremoniously, the three prisoners were crowded into the police car. One of the deputies took the steering wheel and another stood on the running board, covering the robbers with his

CHAPTER XXII
What the Notebook Revealed

JustÑaÑminute,Ó Nancy Drew stammered as she darted toward the roadster, blocking the marshalÕs path. ÒThereÕs a package in the seat. IÕll put it in the back.Ó

Hastily, she picked up the clock which was covered with

notebook and learn whether or not it would disclose the hiding place of Josiah Crowley's second will.

"Oh, I'm so eager to get home and have a chance to dig into the notebook!" she thought as she drove along the road. "I went through a lot to get it and I'll be disappointed if it doesn't contain good news. It will mean so much to the Horner girls and poor old Abigail if the will is found."

It was nearly ten o'clock that night when Nancy, tired and worn from the long automobile ride, reached her home in River Heights. As she drove into the double garage, she noticed that her father's car was gone. A glance at the house disclosed that the windows were dark.

"I wonder where father can be?" she questioned herself. "I wanted to tell him about my discovery right away."

She removed the Crowley clock from the back of

"Oh, I hope everything turns out right for Allie and Grace and for Abigail Rowen!"

Carefully, Nancy thumbed over the pages for they were yellowed with age and she was afraid they might tear. Evidently, Josiah Crowley had used the same notebook for many years.

Page after page the girl read, perusing inconsequential memoranda and numerous notations of property owned by Josiah Crowley, as well as various business transactions made by him. Nancy was surprised at the list of stocks, bonds, and notes which apparently belonged to the estate. The amount reached well over three hundred thousand dollars.

"I had no idea Josiah Crowley had that much money," she murmured.

After a time she grew impatient of the seemingly endless list, and skipping many pages, turned ahead.

She hurriedly read on, but although she carefully examined every page in the book, there was no other mention of the will.

"No wonder the will never came to light," Nancy mused. "Who would have ever thought of looking for it in a safety deposit box under the name of Josiah Harkston? In his zest for safety, Josiah Crowley nearly defeated his own purpose."

Her thoughts were interrupted as she heard an automobile turning in at the drive. Rushing to the window, Nancy saw her father drive into the garage. As he opened the front door she ran to meet him.

"Why, hello, Nancy," he greeted her in surprise. "If I had known you were here, I'd have come home sooner. I was doing some special work on a case. Back from Moon Lake early, aren't you?"

"Yes," Nancy admitted, trying to hide her excitement. "But for a good reason."

"The Tophams aren't going to thank me when they find out what I have done."

"Hardly. They may accuse you of stealing their clock, although so long as their house was open when you entered they can't claim that you broke in. However, if we can manage to keep the knowledge from them, it will be just as well that they don't learn the details of how the will was found."

Carson Drew picked up the notebook and glanced through it with interest.

"The fortune will make a nice nest egg for someone," he commented, as he looked over the lists of stocks and bonds owned by Crowley. "These securities are of the best, too. All gilt edge."

"I hope the Tophams will be cut off without a cent," Nancy declared.

"It's likely they will be; but of course you never

particle of charity for anyone. They would let their relatives starve before they would help them."

Carson Drew glanced again at the notebook in his hand.

"Now that you have found this, the thing to do is locate the will at once before Richard Topham gets wind of what is up," he advised. "We want to administer the *coup de grâce* before the Tophams have a chance to get the fortune into their hands. Once the estate is settled, it will not be easy to wrest it away from them."

"I'd like to turn the matter over to you," Nancy responded promptly, "I'm not familiar with legal procedure and you know exactly what should be done."

"I'll be glad to help you if I can, Nancy. The first thing of course is to get our hands on the will."

"That should be easy. We can drive over to the

"Don't build your hopes too high," Carson Drew advised her wisely. "There may be a slip, you know. We may fail to find the will in the deposit box, and of course there is a chance that Josiah Crowley didn't dispose of the fortune as it was expected that he would. If I were you I wouldn't say anything to the Horner girls until we are certain."

"I won't," Nancy promised, as she turned toward the stairs. "But I can't help hoping. I'm going to bed now and get a good night's rest. Then tomorrow we'll start off on the big adventure! Oh, I can scarcely wait to find out what the will contains!"

Half way up the stairs, she hesitated and then

CHAPTER XXIII

Looking for the Will

When Nancy Drew awoke the following morning, the bright sunlight was streaming in at her open bedroom window. As her eyes

When turned toward the little clock on her dresser, she was alarmed to see that it was after nine oÕclock.

ÒHow could I oversleep on a morning like this?Ó

After a hasty meal, she climbed into the roadster and drove to her father's office. She found him alone in the inner office.

"I'm sorry I overslept this morning," Nancy apologized. "Have I kept you waiting?"

"Not at all," her father assured her pleasantly. "I told Hannah not to awaken you because I knew you needed rest after your hard day yesterday. And, anyway, we couldn't do anything about the will without an order from the court."

"Did you get it?"

"Yes, I saw the judge early this morning. After explaining everything to him he gave me the paper. I have it here." Carson Drew tapped an inside pocket.

"I brought the notebook with me. You wanted it, didn't you?"

"Yes, I thought it might be necessary to show it to

"You must remember one thing, Nancy," returned her father calmly. "Crowley was a queer character and did things in a queer way. So the will may be there, and again it may not be. Perhaps he left only further directions in a box. I remember one case in Canada many years ago. An eccentric Frenchman died and he left directions to look in a trunk of old clothes. In the pocket of a coat were found further directions to look in a closet of his home. There his family found directions to look in a copper boiler. The boiler had disappeared and was finally located in a curiosity shop. Inside, on the bottom, was pasted what proved to be a word puzzle. The old Frenchman's heirs were about to give up in despair when a puzzler solved the puzzle and the man's bag of gold was found—under a board in his bedroom!"

"Oh, but they found it, anyway," breathed Nancy.

The trip to Masonville was quickly accomplished, and in a short time Nancy stopped the roadster in

"Perhaps you did not know him by that name. I believe he had a deposit box here under the name of Josiah Harkston."

"Josiah Harkston?" the banker repeated thoughtfully. "It seems to me we have been trying to get in touch with a man by that name. If I remember correctly the rent on his safety deposit box has not been paid for some time. If you will wait a moment I will find out."

The banker left the room. He returned in a few minutes with a sheet of paper in his hand.

"According to our record a Josiah Harkston rented box 148 from us, but the past year the rent has not been paid. Here is his signature if you care to look at it."

Eagerly Nancy and her father examined the sheet of paper which the banker handed them. At a glance they saw that the writing was in the cramped hand of Josiah Crowley.

"Perfectly. You are welcome to open the safety deposit box—of course in the presence of a bank official. I suppose you have the key?"

Nancy's face fell. She had never once thought of the key.

"We have no key," Mr. Drew admitted. "Isn't there one in the bank which will fit the box?" He knew some small banks had this.

"No, we did away with that when we got our regular vault," said the banker. "But—wait a minute," he added suddenly. "I think I can help you out."

He disappeared into another part of the bank and presently came back holding up a sealed envelope.

"That man had two keys for his box and he left one here in my possession, sealed up as you can see. As you have a court order I feel you are entitled to this key," and he handed the envelope to Mr. Drew.

Unable to resist the temptation, Nancy peeped over her father's shoulder.

The box was empty save for one document in the bottom.

"Oh, it must be the will!" Nancy cried before Mr. Drew could examine the paper.

"It is the will," her father announced, after a hasty glance at the document.

"A will, eh?" said the bank official, with keen interest.

"Yes, and I will ask you to do me a favor. Kindly place your initials on each page—so you can later on identify it if necessary—and I will do the same."

"Certainly, Mr. Drew. I've done that before."

Mr. Drew thanked the president for the help he had given, and with Nancy left the bank. Once they had

died a few days after Crowley. Thomas Wackley, the other witness, I never heard of."

"Oh, I don't care who witnessed the will," Nancy said impatiently. "I want to find out if Allie and Grace and poor Abigail got anything. I can't make head nor tail out of it."

"I see their names are mentioned," Mr. Drew told her, pointing to one of the pages.

"Oh, I'm so glad! So long as I know they're taken care of I suppose I can wait until we get to your office to find out the details. We can have the will copied in typewriting."

"Yes, I want to go over the document carefully. It is evident that Crowley drew it up himself, and I want to make certain it is legal."

"Oh, do you think there is any danger it won't be?" Nancy questioned anxiously.

"I can't tell until I go over it in detail, Nancy. But

What's more, I'll promise that you may be present when the *coup de grâce* is administered to the Tophams!"

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CHAPTER XXIV The Coup de Gr‰ce

Oh, father, itÕs nearly two oÕclock now.

The relatives should be coming in a few minutes! IÕm so excited!Ó

O

Carson Drew, who stood in the living room of the Drew home smiled indulgently at his daughter as she ßuttered about, arranging chairs.

ÒI believe youÕre more thrilled than if you were inheriting the fortune yourself,Ó he remarked.

ÒI am thrilled,Ó Nancy admitted. ÒI can scarcely

Carson Drew and his daughter had read it carefully. Without disclosing the contents to anyone, they had called a special meeting of the relatives at the Drew home.

With the exception of Abigail Rowen, who was confined to her bed, all had promised to be present. Grace and Allie Horner, although not relatives, had also been invited to attend the meeting.

“It’s too bad Abigail Rowan can’t come,” said Nancy. “But we’ll get the news to her fast enough.”

“It will probably be a great surprise all around,” said her father, with a little smile. “Nancy, you have done a remarkable piece of work.”

“Oh, I can hardly wait to have it all cleared up,” cried the happy girl.

“We may have some hard minutes with the Tophams, Nancy.”

“Yes, I suppose so. I suppose anybody would be

few minutes later, the Mathews brothers, William and Fred, arrived.

"I guess everyone is here now except the Tophams," Carson Drew commented. "We had better wait for them a few minutes."

There was no need to wait, for at that moment the doorbell jangled sharply. Nancy opened the door and the four members of the Topham family sailed grandly in. As Carson Drew had predicted, they were accompanied by a lawyer.

"Why have we been called here?" Mrs. Topham demanded, addressing Mr. Drew. "Have you the audacity to claim that another will has been found?"

"I have the will here, Mrs. Topham," Carson Drew replied politely.

"It's preposterous!" Mrs. Topham stormed. "Josiah Crowley made only one will and in that he left

is unusually long, and with your permission I will read only the portions which have to do with the disposal of the property."

Mr. Drew picked up several sheets of typewriting from the table, and after a moment's hesitation began to read in a clear voice:

" 'I, Josiah Crowley, do make this my last will and testament, hereby revoking all former wills by me at any time made. I give and bequeath all my property, real and personal, as follows:

" 'To my beloved friends and neighbors, Allie and Grace Horner, the sum of seventy-five thousand dollars each.' "

"Oh, I can't believe it!" Allie gasped.

"Neither can I!" Mrs. Topham snapped. "One hundred and fifty thousand dollars when they aren't even relatives. Why, that's nearly half of the estate. The will is a fraud!"

" 'To my nephews, Fred and William Mathews, the sum of twenty thousand dollars each,' " Mr. Drew read.

"We didn't expect that much," the Mathews brothers declared, in genuine surprise.

" 'To my cousins, Edna and Matilda Turner, the sum of twenty thousand dollars each.' "

"Oh, how generous!" Edna murmured.

"Aren't we mentioned at all?" Mrs. Topham broke in sharply.

Mr. Drew smiled.

"Yes, you are mentioned, but perhaps not in the way you anticipate. I'm coming to that now.

" 'To Grace and Allie Horner, my household furniture now in the possession of Mrs. Richard Topham.' "

Carson Drew carefully folded the document he had been reading, and after placing it in a drawer, turned to the relatives.

"That is all there is except that there is a proviso to pay all his just debts, including his funeral expenses and that what little balance is left— maybe three or four thousand dollars— goes to the Manningham Old Men's Home. Fortunately, Josiah Crowley kept his assets in a liquid state. It will not be difficult to convert the estate into cash. For that reason I should think it would be possible to draw on your inheritances at once."

"We're actually cut off without a cent?" Richard Topham asked in disbelief. His face was unusually white.

"I am afraid you are," Mr. Drew replied.

"But it can't be," Mr. Topham returned. "You don't understand. I must have the money!"

"Oh, he is, is he?" Mrs. Topham retorted. "If that's all you know about law, you're discharged! We'll get another lawyer and we'll fight to the last ditch!"

With that she arose and stalked grandly from the room. Isabel and Ada followed, after bestowing a withering glance upon Nancy. Mr. Topham brought up the rear. As soon as the door had closed behind them, their lawyer arose and picked up his brief case.

"Well, I can't say I'm sorry to lose the case," he remarked to Mr. Drew, as he, too, took his leave.

At once the atmosphere became less strained. Everyone began to talk at once.

"Oh, Nancy, I can hardly believe it yet!" Allie declared happily. "The money means so much to Grace and me! And we owe it all to you, Nancy Drew! You haven't told us how you came to find the will, but I know you were responsible."

"We all want you, I'm sure," Grace Horner declared quickly. She regarded the others questioningly.

Everyone nodded assent.

"And of course we want you to act as our lawyer," Grace added.

"I'll be glad to assist you," Mr. Drew promised. "If the Tophams bring the matter into court, I'll give them a battle they'll never forget!"

After thanking Mr. Drew and Nancy for what they had done, the relatives at last took their departure. Allie and Grace were the last to leave. As they turned to say good-bye to Nancy, Carson Drew opened a closet and took out the Crowley clock.

"I guess this belongs to you now," he remarked, handing the clock to Allie. "It was included in Crowley's household goods."

"I don't know what we'll do with it," Allie

"The Tophams deserved to be cut off without a cent," Nancy Drew declared. "I'm so glad everything came out right and that Allie and Grace received the bulk of the fortune."

"Yes, they are charming girls. Unless I am mistaken they intend to reward you for what you did, Nancy."

"It wouldn't surprise me. But of course I'll not take money from them. However, if they should offer me a reward, I know what I shall ask for!"

"What is that?"

"Oh, you must wait and see," and Nancy laughed

CHAPTER XXV A Reward

"I suppose youÕve heard about the Tophams,Ó Carson Drew remarked to his daughter, one morning some months after the reading of the Crowley will.

ÒTheyÕre practically in bankruptcy. Richard Topham has been losing steadily on the stock market of late. After his failure to recover the Crowley fortune, the banks reduced his credit. HeÕs been forced to give up his home on the avenue.Ó

"I

Abigail and was delighted to find her in surprisingly good health. She had secured medical attention, and a trained nurse was in constant attendance.

"I believe I'll run out into the country to-day and visit the Horner girls," Nancy told her father. "They telephoned yesterday and asked me to come. They hinted they had something special to tell me."

"Perhaps they're going to reward you for finding the will," Mr. Drew suggested.

"Oh, it's been nearly a month since they said anything about it," Nancy returned carelessly. "By this time they've probably forgotten all about it."

After luncheon, she set off for the farmhouse in her blue roadster. It was a beautiful autumn and Nancy Drew thoroughly enjoyed the ride.

As she came within sight of the farmhouse, Nancy was astonished at the transformation which had

"Allie is in her element these days," she laughed. "She's putting in incubators, and from now on will raise nothing but high-grade fowls."

"You must see everything!" Allie insisted.

Nancy was piloted from one place to another. She saw the new chicken houses which were being built and the incubators. But the thing which pleased her the most was the realization that Allie and Grace were happy in their work.

"Well, I must be getting back to River Heights," she remarked after a time.

"Oh, you can't go yet!" Allie interposed with a quick glance at her sister. "You tell her, Grace."

"We asked you here to-day for a special reason," Grace began a trifle awkwardly. "You see, we've been thinking for a long time that we've never done a thing to show our appreciation for what you did. We've talked with the others and everyone is

future, and yet as she looked down at the timepiece, she seemed to know that exciting days were soon to come.

“I’ll always prize this clock as a trophy of my first venture as a detective,” she said quietly, turning to Allie and Grace. “It will serve as a pleasant reminder of a thrilling adventure—and, who knows? perhaps as a promise for the future!”

The End

THE SECRET OF THE OLD CLOCK